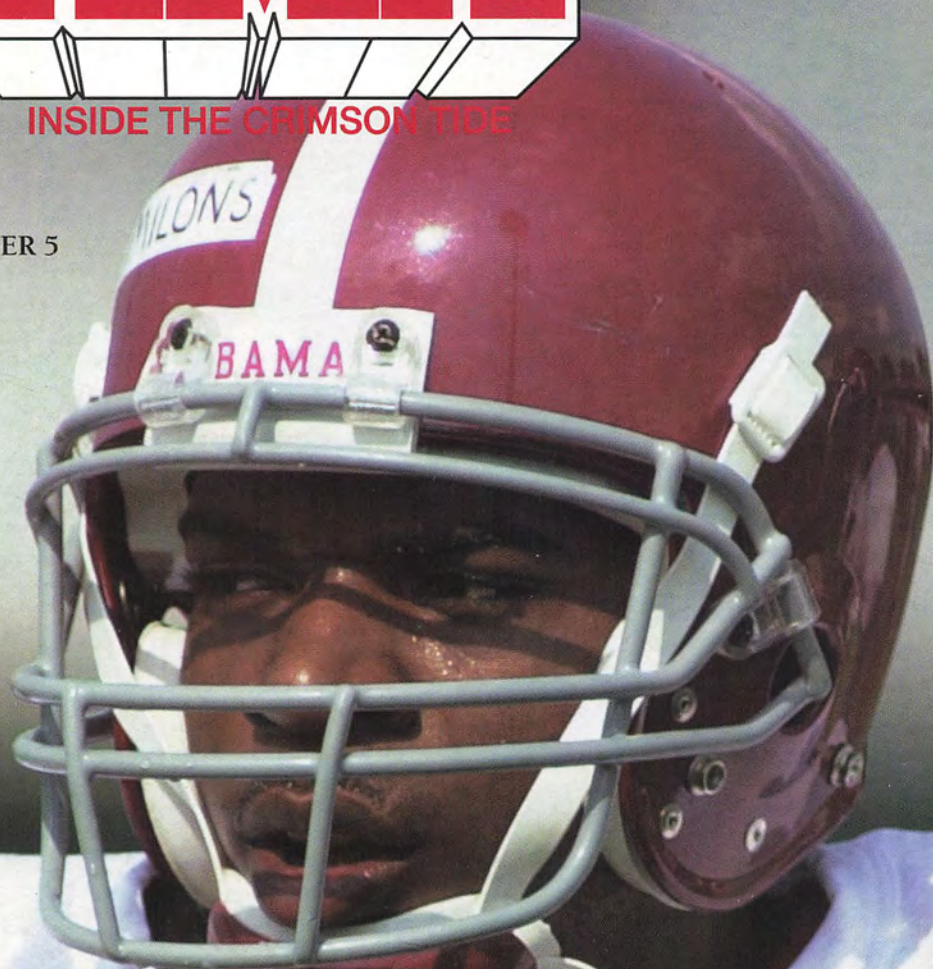


'BAMA

INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

MAY, 2001
VOLUME 23, NUMBER 5



Inside:

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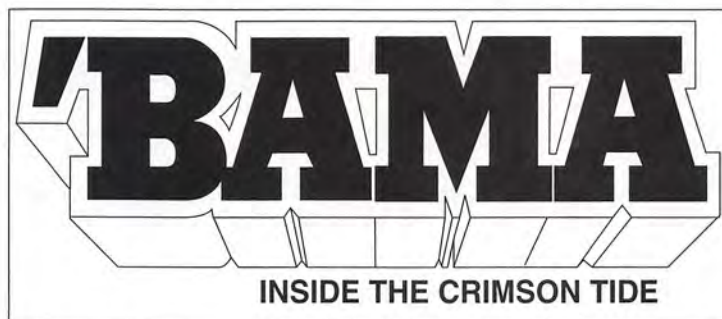
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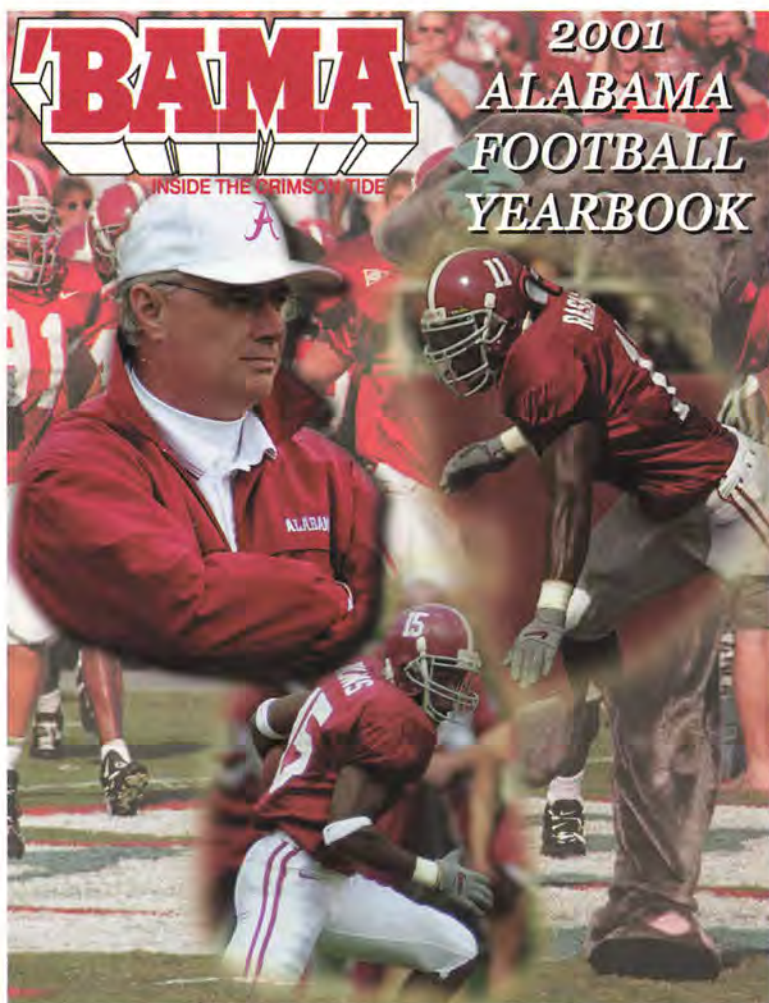
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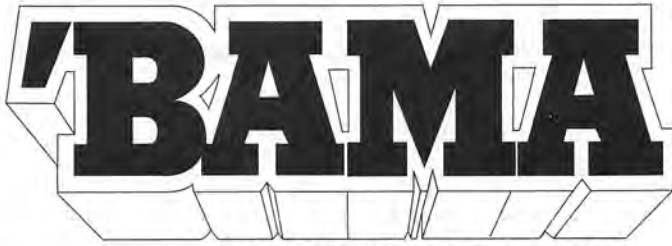
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On The Cover: It may be that no one epitomized the new outlook for Alabama football more than Freddie Milons, the Tide's star wide receiver. There was a new attitude and extraordinarily hard work in Tuscaloosa this spring as Bama began football preparation under new Head Coach Dennis Franchione. See Page 6.

Barry Fikes Photo

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Alabama's goal in gymnastics is the national championship, but when Tide star Andréé Pickens suffered a torn Achilles tendon just days before the NCAA meet, that was no longer a realistic goal. Bama did very well by finishing fourth. Tennis and golf also have completed SEC championship play.

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Mark Gottfried worked out a new contract for himself, then had to find two new assistant basketball coaches. One of the additions is former Tide star T.R. Dunn. by Kirk McNair



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With Gerald Wallace likely headed to the NBA after his freshman season at Alabama, the men's basketball team needed some additional spring signees. The Tide has landed one. Other sports have also inked some new performers in the spring signing period. by Kirk McNair and Donna Fromme

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More Progress Must Be Made

by J.E. Lisby
& Kirk McNair

There are still questions
and some depth needs

Almost from the moment new Alabama Head Football Coach Dennis Franchione stepped on campus, he was bombarded with the questions. What about the talent level at Alabama? What type offense will the Tide run next year? Can Bama fans reasonably hope for a successful season?

Franchione was always careful to sidestep the queries. "We like the attitude of the players, but give us a chance to at least get the team on the practice field, before expecting those answers" was a common reply.

Now spring training, with its NCAA-limited 15 days of practice, has come and gone. And Franchione was hardly shy with his blunt assessment. "I don't think there's any way we can be where I want to be," he said. "I think we're a little farther ahead than (our first spring) at TCU, but we've still got a lot of work to do."

There remains much progress to be made. Depth must be found, notably at defensive tackle and safety. An inexperienced (and in some cases poorly-conditioned) offensive line has a journey to travel before it can expect to dominate. But based on all of spring practice, a reasonable guess at a starting lineup is possible.

On offense, Andrew Zow would likely be the choice at quarterback with tailback Ahmaad Galloway and fullback Donnie Lowe filling out the backfield. Terry Jones Jr. again holds down tight end, with Theo Sanders being utilized in a two-tight-end formation. Along the offensive line, Dante Ellington at strong tackle, Dennis Alexander at strong guard, Alonzo Ephraim at center, Marico Portis or Justin Smiley at quick guard and Wesley Britt at quick tackle are likely starters. At wide receiver Freddie Milons, Jason McAddley and Antonio Carter hold down starting roles. Though four-wide-receiver sets aren't likely to be a staple of next year's offense Franchione also lists Sam Collins first string.

Defensively, Saleem Rasheed in the middle, Victor Ellis on the strong side and Brooks Daniels at rover comprise the linebacking corps. Gerald Dixon and Hirschel Bolden are the most likely starters at left and right cornerback, with free safety



Safety Reggie Myles (23) and defensive end Aries Monroe (22) sandwich tailback Santonio Beard (34), but not before Beard sneaked the ball into the end zone for a touchdown in the A-Day Game.

Barry Fikes Photo

Reggie Myles and strong safety Shontua Ray filling secondary spots. On the defensive line, Kindal Moorehead (right end, or stud), David Daniel (nose tackle), Jarret Johnson (left tackle) and Kenny King (left end, or Ed) are all probable starters.

On special teams, Neal Thomas is set at placekicker with Nick Ridings handling long snaps. Lane Bearden would likely handle punts, with Freddie Milons set to return. And Jason McAddley, Milons and Antonio Carter should share responsibilities returning kickoffs.

Though the squad will begin fall two-a-days intent on improving at every position, three areas will likely be of special concern. After suffering yet another flare-up with his terribly injured knee, middle linebacker Marvin Constant announced that he was giving up football. His retire-

ment and the move of Ellis to the outside leave the Tide with Rasheed as its only proven inside linebacker. At safety, only one athlete (Reggie Myles) returns with any significant game experience, affording a clear chance for one or two incoming freshman to make an immediate impact. And while the coaches are reasonably comfortable with the talent of the athletes working on the offensive line, significant strides must be made at the position.

Tide quarterbacks came in for their share of attention. But amid all the questions and speculation about who should start versus UCLA, Franchione and his staff have been amused. "It's not rocket science," said Offensive Coordinator and Quarterbacks Coach Les Koenning. "It's just coaching. The one that moves the chains, the one that scores the points, he'll start." Senior Andrew Zow appears to have the slight lead in that

category, but junior Tyler Watts has also had a solid spring and is fully recovered from the knee injury that ended his 2000 season. And even little used walk-on Jonathan Richey spent a period atop the depth chart the second week of spring. "Right now there's a fine line of separation there between any of the quarterbacks," Franchione said after A-Day. "Andrew has a strong arm, adequate mobility and the most game experience of them. Tyler is a little more mobile, but he does not have quite as good an arm as Andrew. Right now as far as knowledge of the offense, they're very close. Jonathan started fast. He made fewer mistakes, then leveled off. In arm-strength, speed and agility, Jonathan is probably between Andrew and Tyler."

Of more interest than his comments about the returning quarterbacks was what Franchione had to say about true freshman Brodie Croyle, who graduated high school early in order to participate in spring drills. "I think Brodie has a chance to be the best athlete of the group," the coach said. "He's got good feet, some speed and his arm is comparable to Andrew's. He's got as close to the total package of any of the other quarterbacks." And with highly regarded signee Spencer Pennington arriving in August, don't expect the starting quarterback's name to be chiseled in stone any time soon.

Despite having three strong contenders battling for the job, there doesn't appear to be the same degree of uncertainty surrounding tailback. Last season's principal starter, Ahmaad Galloway, returns, but Brandon Miree, a powerful runner, continues to challenge. And based on talent alone, Santonio Beard may have the biggest upside. But Franchione made clear the identity of his starter, following the final scrimmage. "In my mind Ahmaad Galloway is our starting tailback. I think Brandon has some real hope for us. I think Santonio Beard has some explosiveness. But I think Ahmaad has established himself to say that he's our starting tailback right now."

As the leading blocker into the line ahead of the tailback, the fullback is critical to the success of Bama's offense. And with academic problems continuing to plague Marvin Brown, heading into spring the staff was worried. Donnie Lowe (see Page 16) has alleviated much of that concern. With Lowe set as starter and Brown backing up, the Tide should be fine at fullback. But should Brown fail in his efforts to gain eligibility, expect a scramble to find adequate depth, either by moving a current player to fullback or more likely by utilizing a new August arrival.

With returning starter and likely future pro Terry Jones recovering nicely from his knee surgery, number one at tight end was never in doubt. But depth was. Previously overlooked Theo Sanders, who is one of the bet-

Spring Training Award Winners

At the conclusion of each spring practice, Alabama coaches select a number of spring awards, named in honor of former Crimson Tide football stars. This year those selected were:

- Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter: sophomore linebacker Brooks Daniels
- Jerry Duncan "I like to Practice": senior flanker Freddie Milons
- Billy Neighbors Most Improved Defensive Lineman: junior defensive tackle Kindal Moorehead
- Bobby Johns Most Improved Defensive Back: sophomore safety Charles Jones and junior cornerback Hirschel Bolden
- Paul Crane Most Improved Offensive Lineman: freshman center Evan Mathis and junior tight end Theo Sanders
- Ray Perkins Most Improved Receiver: junior flanker Sam Collins
- Johnny Musso Most Improved Offensive Back: sophomore fullback Donnie Lowe
- Sylvester Croom Commitment to Excellence: junior tailback Ahmaad Galloway and junior linebacker Saleem Rasheed
- Woodrow Lowe Most Improved Linebacker: sophomore Brooks Daniels
- Ozzie Newsome Most Improved Freshman: cornerback Thurman Ward and quarterback Brodie Croyle
- Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant Best Walk-on: senior quarterback Jonathan Richey; sophomore cornerback Corey Ferguson and junior safety Wayne Bacon
- Derrick Thomas Community Award: junior quarterback Tyler Watts

ter athletes on the squad, was recognized by the new staff and has had a very good spring. One of the harder workers in the weight room, Sanders brings a good combination of mobility and power to the position. And Casey Gilbert seems capable of helping as well, especially as a blocker. However, tight end is another position where incoming players could make an early impact.

Alabama returns only two starters on the offensive line, and that's a statistic that has Franchione worried. "We're a very inexperienced team in the secondary and along the offensive line," he said. "And those are two places you don't want to be young. We've got to improve our pass protection. There's no doubt about that. But I do think that when we get confident in the running game that we have a chance to get better there." Tide coaches are confident in the talent of eight players. Besides the listed starters (Ellington, Alexander, Ephraim, Portis and Britt), guard Justin Smiley, tackle Atlas Herrion and center Evan Mathis are providing serious competition at their positions. But ideally the line would be two-deep at every spot, and the search for those players will continue in the fall. Plus, with some starters currently as much as 30 pounds over their projected playing weight, several players face a tough summer getting into condition.

If there is one position that can challenge wide receiver in terms of talented numbers, it's defensive end. Behind starters Moorehead and King, Aries Monroe, Nautyn McKay-Loescher, Shawn Oglesby and Antwan Odom are all quality athletes, providing the Tide coaches some much-needed flexibility. "Defensive tackle is still a concern," said Tide Defensive Coordinator Carl Torbush. "We've got to make sure that we have enough bodies to be physical inside.

But with five or six of our defensive players, we can move them around. We want 11 unselfish guys who are going to be productive and get the job done for us." So expect both Moorehead and King to sometimes slide inside, especially on passing situations, to alleviate the lack of depth at defensive tackle. Of course if Anthony Bryant can lose 20-plus pounds and incoming freshman Mac Tyler can get eligible, suddenly most of the concerns on the interior of the Bama defensive line go away.

Led by returning All-America Saleem Rasheed, Alabama's linebacking corps is the main reason why many practice observers are predicting a good year for the Tide on defense. One of the fastest, strongest and most relentless athletes on the team, playing middle linebacker allows Rasheed to keep the play in front of him and pursue to the football. Former starter Darius Gilbert is his principal backup for now, but look for incoming freshman Freddie Roach to get a long look in the fall. On the strong side, Ellis returns to his more natural position of outside linebacker, and behind him sophomore Cornelius Wortham could be the most improved player on defense. Handling the hybrid rover position (part defensive end, part linebacker, part safety), Brooks Daniels has been outstanding. "Brooks is probably the most consistent linebacker we've had all spring," Torbush said. He's athletic and plays with a lot of enthusiasm." Also working at rover, Jason Rawls has shown promise.

The Tide defensive backs are young and inexperienced. "Secondary is always a concern," Torbush said. "That's a position where you can get beat the quickest. You give up one there, and you've got some trouble." At cornerback both Dixon and Bolden have game-day experience, and behind them the coaches are high on Carlos Andrews and Thurman Ward who both have excellent

size and speed. "I like what we've got at corner," Torbush said. "Thurman and Carlos have had a good camp. We've put (our corners) in some one-on-one situations, and they've done well." At free safety, Reggie Myles has the most talent, and after a bit of attitude adjusting he should retain the starting job backed up by Charles Jones. If Shontua Ray can continue to develop at strong safety, the talented but little-used senior should start. But don't expect walk-on candidate Waine Bacon to go away, as the junior was a spring star.

As the rebuilding process continues, the new coaching staff has plenty to work on over the next several months. But after a tough series of spring practices, Franchione remains optimistic. "The players have been inspiring in the way they have handled themselves," he said. "We've got a lot of work to do on our Xs and Os and in becoming more physical—there's no doubt about that. But I feel really good about where we are in becoming a football team."

As for the April 14 A-Day Game that ended spring practice, the Crimson, made up primarily of the first offense and second defense, defeated the White, 10-7. In addition to first and second team members, who did most of the playing, there was

action by third teamers, including Marc Miller, who completed a 38-yard pass to Derrick Woods, for the winning score.

In voting by media, the Dixie Howell Award for the Most Valuable Player in the game went to walk-on quarterback Jonathan Richey of the White. Richey completed a 46-yard pass to Michael James to set up a short touchdown that appeared to be the winning score at the time voting for the Dixie Howell Award took place. Richey finished with two completions in five attempts for 47 yards.

The winner of the Dwight Stephenson Most Valuable Lineman Award went to defensive end Nautyn McKay-Loescher of the Crimson squad. Loescher was officially credited with one tackle and one assist, plus a sack for a nine-yard loss.

The game, played before an estimated 35,000 fans at Bryant-Denny Stadium, was actually a controlled scrimmage with no kickoffs and no punt returns. The game was played in just over an hour and a half as it was conducted in 10-minute quarters. Head Coach Dennis Franchione did not take part in the game, confining himself to the press box where he provided commentary for the Alabama radio and television broadcasts.

Following the game, Franchione said, "I though we played hard, played physically, and gave good effort. And we played a lot of

people. It will be a great film for our coaches to use in evaluation."

The coach said, "I thought today was kind of an example of how the spring has gone. The defense made a lot of big plays, but also gave up some big plays. We just can't give up those big plays. The offense is behind the defense. There's no secret about that. The offense has a lot of growing to do. We had some flashes of good plays by a few players like (quarterback) Andrew Zow, but it was not good enough. I'm concerned about the offense." But, he said, while the offense is "not where we want it to be," he said "it's probably about where it would be expected to be after 15 practices."

He added, "It wouldn't matter if this was our tenth spring [as a staff at Alabama] or our first spring, if the defense is not ahead of the offense you have a concern. We don't have that concern."

Franchione has emphasized that the summer off-season program will be important for the Tide being ready to proceed with the 29 practices before opening the 2001 season against UCLA on September 1.

In a general wrapup of a number of areas, the Tide coach said there was not much separation among the quarterbacks, that he thought the secondary had made strides, that Alabama was getting very good play from its defensive ends, that the offensive line was young and still had a long way to go, and that he thought tailback Ahmaad Galloway had made good progress in the last half of spring practice.

He also noted good things from placekicker Neal Thomas, who nailed a 52-yarder late in the first quarter, and punter Lane Bearden, who punted only once in the A-Day Game, a 55-yard effort.

Overall, Franchione said, "I think the spring went well. You can only change so much physically in a short time, but you can change them mentally. I think they have a good attitude, they have worked hard, and they are learning to become a team. I'm very pleased with how the players have responded."

Thomas' field goal gave the Crimson a 3-0 lead late in the first quarter. Just before halftime, after Richey's pass to James gave the White a first down at the Crimson one-yard line, Santonio Beard was able to get the touchdown by reaching over the stripe. Miller's 38-yard pass to Woods with just under five minutes to play completed the scoring and gave the Crimson its win.

The leading rusher in the game was third-team Crimson tailback Josh Smith, who had five carries for 29 yards. Other rushing numbers for the Crimson were fullback Donnie Lowe and fullback Keith Pritchett, each with three carries for 13 yards, quarterback Tyler Watts two for six, and Galloway five for 10. For the White, tailback Brandon Miree had eight runs for 26 yards, tailback

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Santonio Beard seven for 16, and fullback Marvin Brown two for nine.

In passing, Zow completed three of seven and had one interception for 103 yards. Richey was good on two of five for 47 yards, Brodie Croyle good on two of five for 14 yards (with one interception), while Watts failed to complete his one attempt.

No receiver caught more than one pass. Yardage for the receivers was Freddie Milons 48, James 46, Woods 38, Sam Collins 30, Terry Jones 25, Joel Babb 8, Tyler Greer 6, and Lance Taylor 1.

In addition to Bearden, punter Michael Ziifle had a good day with three punts for a 40-yard average, including a long punt of 52 yards.

White cornerback Hirschel Bolden turned in an interception against Zow when the Crimson was threatening to score. Crimson safety Wayne Bacon, who has had an excellent spring, also had an interception, picking off Croyle in the end zone on a "Hail Mary" play at the end of the first half.

Cornelius Wortham led the Crimson in tackles with five primaries and three assists (including one tackle for a five-yard loss). Bacon also had five primaries and added an assist, while Jason Rawls had four primaries, two assists and a sack and Shawn Oglesby five tackles plus two sacks. For the White, Saleem Rasheed had five primary tackles and two assists, Victor Ellis three primaries and two assists, and Jarrett Johnson, Gerald Dixon, Brad Biel, and Carl McInnish three each. Brooks Daniels had two primary tackles and also added a sack.

2001 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Series Record
Sept. 1	UCLA	Tuscaloosa	Tied, 1-1
Sept. 8	Vanderbilt	Nashville	Alabama leads, 56-19-4
Sept. 15	Southern Miss	Birmingham	Alabama leads, 29-6-2
Sept. 22	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 7-4-0
Sept. 29	South Carolina	Columbia	Alabama leads, 10-0-0
Oct. 6	Texas-El Paso	Birmingham	First Meeting
Oct. 13	Mississippi	Oxford	Alabama leads, 39-7-2
Oct. 20	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 42-34-7
Nov. 3	LSU	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 42-17-5
Nov. 10	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 67-15-3
Nov. 17	Auburn	Auburn	Alabama leads, 37-27-1
Southeastern Conference Championship Game			
Dec. 1	TBA	Atlanta	Alabama has 2-3 record

2002 Crimson Tide Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site
Aug. 31	Middle Tennessee State	Birmingham
Sept. 7	Oklahoma	Norman
Sept. 14	North Texas State	Tuscaloosa
Sept. 21	Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa
Sept. 28	Arkansas	Fayetteville
Oct. 5	Georgia	Tuscaloosa
Oct. 19	Ole Miss	Tuscaloosa
Oct. 26	Tennessee	Knoxville
Nov. 2	Vanderbilt	Nashville
Nov. 9	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa
Nov. 16	LSU	Baton Rouge
Nov. 23	Auburn	Tuscaloosa
Southeastern Conference Championship Game		
Dec. 7	TBA	Atlanta

Alabama Football Depth Chart After Spring Practice

Coach Dennis Franchione has said the depth chart will be subject to frequent revision. Nevertheless, the depth chart at the completion of spring practice has a little more meaning than others. This staff has had 15 days of practice with these players and the judgment of the coaches is based on those workouts. Because Franchione makes plans for the fall based on the players who are in spring practice, barring special circumstances this will likely be the depth chart when fall drills begin. On this depth chart we are listing Adam Cox as a fullback, but that spring experiment did not appear to be a good one and Cox could be back on defense at linebacker in the fall. This chart includes 12 offensive positions.

Offense

SPLIT END: Antonio Carter, Triandos Luke, Brandon Greer, Tarry Givens
QUICK TACKLE: Wesley Britt, Atlas Herrion, Shaun Williams
QUICK GUARD: Marico Portis, Justin Smiley, Keith Stephens
CENTER: Alonzo Ephraim, Evan Mathis, Patrick Hollingsworth
STRONG GUARD: Dennis Alexander, Danny Martz, Bart Raulston
STRONG TACKLE: Dante Ellington, Lannis Baxley, Matt Lomax
TIGHT END: Terry Jones, Theo Sanders, Casey Gilbert, David Cavan
QUARTERBACK: Andrew Zow, Tyler Watts, Jonathan Richey, Brodie Croyle
TAILBACK: Ahmaad Galloway, Brandon Miree, Santonio Beard, Josh Smith
FULLBACK: Donnie Lowe, Nick Signaigo, Marvin Brown, Adam Cox
FLANKER: Freddie Milons, Michael James, Dre Fulgham, Stephen Moore
SLOTBACK: Jason McCaddley, Sam Collins, Joel Babb, Derrick Woods

Defense

RIGHT END: Kindal Moorehead, Nautyn McKay-Loescher, Shawn Oglesby
NOSE TACKLE: David Daniel, Anthony Bryant, Allen Hollie, Rhodie Larson
LEFT TACKLE: Jarrett Johnson, Derek Sanders, Gerard Clark, David Voyles
LEFT END: Kenny King, Aries Monroe, Antwan Odom
MIDDLE LINEBACKER: Saleem Rasheed, Darius Gilbert
STRONGSIDE LINEBACKER: Victor Ellis, Cornelius Wortham, Brandon Dean
ROVER: Brooks Daniels, Jason Rawls, Brad Biehl
LEFT CORNERBACK: Gerald Dixon, Carlos Andrews, Roberto McBride, Hamid Haqq
RIGHT CORNERBACK: Hirschel Bolden, Thurman Ward, Ray Hudson, Corey Ferguson
STRONG SAFETY: Shontua Ray, Wayne Bacon, Tyler Harris, Chris James
FREE SAFETY: Reggie Myles, Charles Jones, Connie Brown

Special Teams

PLACEKICKER: Neal Thomas, Brian Bostick, Danny Haynes
PUNTER: Lane Bearden, Matt Sanders, Michael Ziifle, Robert Freeland
DEEP SNAPPER: Nick Ridings, David Hardin

Quest Is On For 2002 Signees

by James Edwards

Evaluation process begins as soon as signing ends and Tide coaches are on the job

National Signing Day is an ending and a beginning. When Alabama Head Coach Dennis Franchione and his staff completed a recruiting class that was far better than most had anticipated, that closed the book to some extent on 2000-01 recruiting. And it marked the beginning of the 2001-02 recruiting period, which in some respects never ends.

Most expect that Alabama will have even better recruiting success with a staff that has been on board for a full year rather than for a couple of months. Big strides were made with the Alabama spring coaching clinic, described by many high school coaches as the most helpful clinic ever held in this state. And Alabama's coaching staff, virtually unknown to most of the state's prep coaches prior to this spring, is now welcome in every school in the state, just as the high school coaches have been made to feel welcome in Tuscaloosa.

Recruiting is in full stride now during an evaluation period (formerly known as the May evaluation period, but which now begins in late April). The staff will have camps this summer which will likely be attended by some top prospects and a number of others who could develop into prospects. Most unofficial visits and a few official visits will come next fall, with most official visits coming next December and January before the 2002 Signing Day, when the process will begin again.

For many prospects and their families, Alabama's recent A-Day Game offered an opportunity to meet assistant coaches and Coach Fran. Over 100 prep players, most of them from Alabama, were on hand for the A-Day Game. Among those spotted were:

Defensive end James Adams of Tuscaloosa County, defensive back Jason Allen of Muscle Shoals, offensive lineman Jeffrey Allen of Birmingham Huffman, offensive lineman Jason Berry of Hamilton, linebacker Ryan Brick of Prattville, running back Richard Cantrell of Cleburne County in Heflin, defensive tackle Raymond Chaney of Mobile Shaw, defensive lineman Jeremy Clark of Daphne, defensive lineman Jamal Cooper of Montgomery Lee, quarterback Chris Crumpton of Hartselle, running back Kenneth Darby of Huntsville Butler, offensive lineman Quinton Harris of Courtland, wide receiver Kewaskie Jackson of



Kyle Tatum

Birmingham Woodlawn, athlete Nick Luke (brother of Bama's Triandos Luke) of Phenix City Central, offensive lineman Brandon McKinney of Birmingham Huffman, offensive lineman Nick Roberts of Springville, defensive lineman Kyle Tatum of Prattville, offensive lineman William Ward of Prattville, and tight end Logan Wilks of Plainview.

There were also at least three upcoming juniors on hand. They included Tim Castille (son of former Tide great Jeremiah Castille) of Birmingham Brentwood Christian, linebacker William Roach (brother of Tide signee Freddie Roach) of Killen Brooks, and offensive lineman Zac Tubbs of Cullman.

Although a final determination of major college football prospects from within the state of Alabama is yet to be made, it appears it will be a good year in the Heart of Dixie. It would not be a surprise is a handful of those who were on hand at the A-Day Game have already been offered scholarships, if not by Alabama then by other major college football teams.

Early indications are that Alabama had many of the very top prospects for its spring game. They would include defensive end Kyle Tatum (6-7, 275) of Prattville, running back Kenneth Darby (5-10, 185) of Huntsville Butler, running back Jason Allen

(6-1, 200) of Muscle Shoals, and defensive lineman Jeremy Clark (6-3, 285) of Daphne.

Here are some other upcoming seniors in Alabama high schools who will be the subject of recruiting conversation in upcoming months. Some of these may have also been at Alabama's A-Day Game, but not verified by our scouts.

Linebacker Zach Anderson of Bay Minette Baldwin County, quarterback Brandon Avalos of Tuscaloosa Hillcrest, safety Larry Brackins of Dothan, wide receiver J.J. Chisholm of Centreville Bibb County, quarterback Brandon Cox of Trussville, wide receiver Lance Hamilton of Chatom Washington County, center Cody Grammer of Tuscaloosa County, defensive end Chris Harris of Tuscaloosa Central, cornerback Durand Jackson of Moulton Lawrence County, offensive guard Will Johnson of Athens, linebacker Earnest Nance of Courtland, defensive end James Newby of Athens, running back Trevis O'Neal of Leeds, wide receiver Matt Pierce of Mobile UMS Wright, running back Derrick Rodgers of Evergreen Hillcrest, running back Terry Rucker of Birmingham Tarrant, running back Titus Ryan of Tuscaloosa County, safety Kevin Sears of Russellville, defensive tackle Henry Smith of Aliceville, offensive tackle Kevin Thornton of Gadsden, defensive tackle Antonio Underwood of Birmingham Tarrant, and linebacker Darius Wilder of Aliceville.

Of course, Franchione and his staff have made it clear they intend to contact each of the nation's top 100 prospects. Coach Fran has said that he considers Alabama's national reputation to be a recruiting advantage he intends to take full advantage of in the state, region, and nation.

Looking For A Speaker?

BAMA Editor Kirk McNair is a frequent speaker at meetings of Alabama alumni, Red Elephant gatherings, Quarterback and Touchdown clubs, etc.

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Tide Pays More Than Lip Service

by J.E. Lisby

Under Franchione, kicking game really is "special"

Anyone who knows football will agree that the kicking game is a critical aspect. After all, the game begins with a kick. And, as is oft-repeated, kicking game plays account for about a third of the game.

But Mark Tommerdahl, Alabama special teams coordinator and the man directly responsible for the success or failure of Bama's kicking game, has a slightly different take. "Most coaches say that special teams are important because they represent one third of the game," Tommerdahl said. "And statistically that's probably true. But from the point of view of impact on the game, we believe it's the most important phase. We all know the impact that a single play can have—whether it's a great kickoff return or whether it's a block. Those plays can have a tremendous ripple effect throughout a game or an entire season."

Stating that special teams are even more important than offense or defense is a significant extension of the theme. But Tommerdahl is only reflecting a mandate established by Alabama Head Coach Dennis Franchione. "Every coaching staff in America talks about the importance of special teams," Franchione said. "But I'd like to think the way we divide up our coaching staff, the coaching numbers, the practice time that we commit to it and the fact that we put the best players that can play on the field is an illustration of how important we feel they are."

"The commitment to special teams here is not just lip service," Tommerdahl said. "You can go and talk to any other team in this league, and the head coach is supposed to say 'We're committed to special teams.' Here, we just are. It's the real deal."

Like most head coaches, Franchione began with the normal attitude toward special teams. But years of hard-won experience taught him that simply listing special teams as a priority isn't good enough. You have to follow through with concrete steps to make it so. And designating Mark Tommerdahl as a third coordinator, along with Les Koenning and Carl Torbush on offense and

defense respectively, is an important illustration. "Coach Tommerdahl understands the kicking game," Franchione said. "He's a little bit like a head coach on special teams. He oversees it all. He keeps the coaches organized, and he takes great pride in it. It's something that he's good at."

A native of Minnesota, Tommerdahl was coaching tight ends and special teams for the Golden Gophers when he met Franchione during an off-season exchange of information between staffs. And despite the long move across the country, he jumped at the chance to join Franchione at New Mexico in the same capacity. This season will mark the fifth year the two have worked together. "In my position I really have to give a lot of the credit to Fran," Tommerdahl said. "If you're going to be successful in any phase of this game, you have to have strong support from the top."

A look at the statistics reveals that Franchione squads have backed his commitment up on the field. For the last two seasons, TCU led the nation in kickoff returns (utilizing two different return men) and placed 16th in net punting. The NCAA keeps track of four statistics for special teams, and on the conference level Franchione's teams led their conference the past two years in three of four categories.

The new Tide coaches acknowledge that Southeastern Conference football is on another level. "We see the talent in this league, and we're humbled by it," Tommerdahl said. "The play in the SEC is not good—it's tremendous. Any given play is dynamic and violent. It's rock and roll with every snap."

But Tommerdahl is confident that the basic philosophy will yield results in any league, and it begins with a genuine commitment from the staff. "I'm extremely grateful for how involved our staff is in special teams," he said. "When we run our kickoff coverage drill, you've got seven middle-aged guys running down the field as fast as God will let them, screaming their heads off. They like it, and that attention to detail on special teams spreads to the kids."

When a team is consistently successful, fans naturally assume the existence of intricate schemes and a complicated playbook, filled with Xs and Os with arrows headed off in every direction.

Not exactly.

Tommerdahl said, "From a scheme standpoint, there is nothing different in what we do. Nothing. We're extremely simplistic—actually a lot simpler than most (teams) that

we play. We're not going to try and fool you with anything particularly fancy. We're just going to try to be very good at it. What sets us apart is the amount of emphasis that is placed on it by the staff."

In addition to designating a special teams coordinator, Franchione names four different staffers as head coaches of individual units. For Alabama, Kenith Pope directs kickoff returns; Ron Case handles kickoff coverage; Chris Thurmond works with punt return/punt defense; Stan Eggen coaches PAT/field goal block; and Tommerdahl is in charge of punt and PAT/field goal offense.

"The one thing that sells (special teams) to our players is every coach is committed," Tommerdahl said. "For example, I promise you that Stan Eggen is going to come up with a game plan every week for PAT/field goal block—a specific game plan. It's not just 11 guys on defense that stick their hands up in the air when they see the ball kicked. He's going to put in two hours on Monday afternoon, and he's going to come up with the best possible block scheme he can. I question if most coaching staffs are willing to put in that amount of time."

The commitment by the Tide staffers goes even further, as every "head coach" has his own group of assistants. Tommerdahl explains. "For instance, I'm the head coach of the punt team with Ron Case as one of my assistants, while I work for Ron Case on kickoff coverage. I'm one of his assistants there. Each head coach has full control of his staff. And the guys are all extremely supportive. We just get into it. With one exception on one team, no assistant on our special teams coaches more than two guys. Everybody is just watching two players. So our athletes get a lot of individual attention. It's not like we have 11 guys just running up and down the field."

Every aspect of the plan is designed to highlight the importance of special teams. Even the selection process makes it clear to the players that they are engaged in serious business. "We get to pick the players we work with," Tommerdahl said. "Because we have so many coaches involved, we'll pick the individuals we want to coach. I think that sends a good message to the kids. If I'm coaching the right guard on the punt team, I make it real clear that 'Hey, you're my choice here, son. Let's go. Let's work well together.' It allows our coaching staff to have immediate rapport with their players. They're coaching hand-picked individuals."



Mark Tommerdahl is coordinator of Alabama special teams. Every phase of the kicking game gets detailed attention under Head Coach Dennis Franchione. Barry Fikes Photo

And Tommerdahl is convinced that it helps off the field as well. "We're dealing with an MTV generation. Today's society has a short attention span. If we have a five-minute special teams meeting, it doesn't do me much good to stand up in front of the group and drone on to 11 or 22 guys, trying to keep their attention. It just doesn't work that well. But because of the way we set up our system, we've got all these coaches in-

involved. And in our meetings, the coaches will sit with their two players. So Ron Case is coaching two guys. He's got one guy on each side of him; he's got their attention. And he'll hold it."

But perhaps the most unusual aspect of Franchione's commitment is demonstrated not simply by coaching involvement but by his determination to always utilize the best athlete—no matter what. "I would put it this

way," Tommerdahl said. "If your best tailback is good enough to make the cannon go off after a 50-yard touchdown run, then what's wrong with making the cannon go off after a 100-yard kickoff return? The points are the same."

And they're not just talking about putting an All-America receiver like Freddie Milons back to return punts. The commitment runs much deeper than that. If Franchione believes that Milons is the best man for the job, then the star receiver could very well find himself flying in off the edge to block punts and placekicks as well. "I've been a head coach for quite a few years, and my thoughts have changed," Franchione said. "I've grown in that area. I thought I was emphasizing it. But because I was not putting the best personnel out there, I wasn't [emphasizing it]. It's easy for a lot of coaches to have the backups play special teams, but that's not the way we look at it. It's the best player at the time. That may turn out to be a backup, but we had a Lombardi Award candidate start on two of our special teams last year. We're going to play the best players."

Things can change, but the Tide staff began this spring with the assumption that most of the athletes who will make up next season's special teams were already on campus, and extensive practice began during spring. And proving the point that the best athletes will play, Saleem Rasheed, Alabama's starting middle linebacker and one of Bama's biggest returning stars, is being looked at to participate on four different units. "If you have a kid who is best suited to play, then he's on all the teams," Tommerdahl said. "And that's not just me talking. That's historical fact. We have had several key players involved in five or six special teams."

But even more important than talent, Tommerdahl is looking for players with that special look in their eyes. "Pure athletic ability alone is not going to get it done," he said. "This is a unique phase of the game. You are isolating yourself in front of God and everybody for one play. There are a lot of guys on this team who can run real fast. We need that one who has his eyes set about six inches deep in his head. And it's not like we just put wild-eyed guys to run down on kickoff coverage either. You need the right type personality. The coaching at this level is sophisticated enough that reckless abandon will get you beat. You'd better be the type of player who is going to be able to play hard and play smart at the same time."

"Special teams is no place to earn your wings," Tommerdahl said. "It's just too expensive. This is the quickest way to turn a game around—good or bad. So we'd better have our best out there."

A Perfect Fit With Crimson Tide

by J. E. Lisby

Placekicker wants to make every kick in senior season

For many Division IA athletes, the decision on where to attend college is limited. In some cases a player grew up worshipping one school and is going there no matter what. More frequently, their options are limited, as only certain programs are inviting them to join. For Neal Thomas, the Crimson Tide's returning placekicker, it came down to a question of fit.

Despite the fact Alabama's 1999 starter (Ryan Pflugner) had graduated, Thomas wasn't pursued by the Tide early on. "I went to a lot of places," the Hinds (Mississippi) Community College graduate said. "But I didn't know where I was going after junior college. I wasn't recruited by Alabama. I traveled everywhere in the Southeast, visiting schools and studying their rosters. South Carolina and Mississippi State offered me scholarships. Neither had a returning kicker. But I took five (unofficial) visits to Alabama, and I just felt like this was the place for me. It felt like a perfect fit."

Recruiting is an imperfect science with the best talent evaluators making frequent mistakes. Placekicking seems to be a particular problem position, as even the most highly-regarded kickers often don't pan out. "A lot of people think all kickers are head cases," Thomas said. "And there are a lot of them out there. I know kickers who can go 10-for-10, 20-for-20 in practice, but they get in the game and miss every kick."

Recruiters seem inclined to take a chance on pedigree or geography when looking for kickers, signing players from a given family or school, assuming that kicking ability can be passed along through the gene pool or by association. Thomas hails from Clinton, Mississippi, a hotbed of high school soccer and an area that has produced several major college kickers. "I have been around a lot of good kickers," he said. "Jared Holmes (Auburn and the NFL), Brian Hazelwood (Mississippi State) and Scott Westerfield (Hinds and MSU). I watched those guys coming up, and I got a feeling that I could do that. Clinton is a big soccer area with an excellent program that has produced a lot of kickers."

Bama's new coaching staff has a reputation for productivity in the kicking game. But interestingly, Special Teams Coordinator Mark Tommerdahl denies any specific expertise. According to him, the best placekickers arrive on campus highly-skilled from work at various kicking seminars around the country. Consequently, he is careful not to get too involved for fear of ruining their mechanics. But the Tide's returning starter defies that norm. "I've never been to a single kicking camp," Thomas said. "And I've never really even been coached by anybody. I've coached myself. I've been out there kicking on my own. Really, I just learned from repetition and by watching other kickers. It's just all repetition. Kick after kick. I couldn't tell you how many balls I've kicked or how many hours I've spent practicing."

In high school, Thomas played football and baseball along with his best sport of soccer. And after competing for five years with a select touring team, several schools were offering soccer scholarships. But he

made the decision to pursue a career in football. "Playing three sports in high school, I probably wasn't at the top of my game in football," Thomas said. "Hinds Junior College was only eight minutes from home, so I went there to play football. They've got a good program, and I kicked a lot, which really helped me out. I was 12-of-14 my first year and 20-of-26 my second."

After deciding that Tuscaloosa was the place for him, Thomas earned the starting job as a walk-on and was one of the few positives during an otherwise dismal 2000 season. Statistically, he was a perfect 27-for-27 on extra point attempts and 9-of-13 in field goals for a total of 54 points, good enough to lead the Tide in scoring. And Alabama Head Coach Dennis Franchione hopes he can take up where he left off next year. "Neal has still got to earn the job with us, but he's pretty confident out there that he can do that," Franchione said. "He knows what he can do. He's been there before. If anybody is pretty comfortable in their role right now, I think he is."

For Thomas, who attributes his calm, level-headed demeanor to his father, it's all about consistency. "I guess you could say that consistency is my strength," he said. "At this level, you should know what to do. So it comes down to repetition and being consistent."

"You go in the red zone to score," Franchione said. "It's really deflating if you get down there and don't walk away with at least a field goal. Neal has a degree of consistency; he has a confidence and a belief system in himself that makes you comfortable, which is good. You want a kicker who has that kind of air. Thomas is hitting the ball very well, and we feel good about him."

Franchione also appreciates Thomas' unselfish attitude. "The fans may think Neal is going to miss or make the kick," Thomas said. "But I don't think of it that way. It's not just me kicking. Nick Ridings snapping the ball and Jonathan Richey spotting are both as important as me. It's like having the ball on a perfect tee every time. Even though the fans think that way, I'm not out there by myself. It takes 11 guys to kick a field goal. We scored 54 points last year. And yes, I kicked the ball. But I didn't hold it. I didn't snap it. And I sure didn't make a block. All of that is just as important as kicking. I may get the credit, but every time we make a kick I try and thank the other 10 guys."

The kicker has to be talented, but it's a team effort. "I've been fortunate to have very good holders and snappers," Thomas said. "Jonathan, Nick and I have very good relationships off the field. That's important, because they go out there and want to do well. We want to do well for each other. We push ourselves. Also, our times are very good. They're supposed to be three tenths of a second and under in getting the ball off, and we're hitting point one-five. That's very quick, and we can get better as we keep practicing."

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With the same group in place last season, Thomas, Ridings and Richey provided consistency. It was a welcome change from the drama of an extra point kick which had been the norm at Alabama for several previous seasons.

One particular positive in the placekicking game was Thomas being perfect on all three of his 50-yard field goal attempts. "Everybody asks me about the 50-yarders, but they're all points," Thomas said. "Every kick is the same—at least you've got to approach it the same. Your steps are the same. You approach the same, and you kick it the same. That's the way I look at it. Head down and right down the middle."

"Right down the middle" was good enough for a 69 per cent success rate in 2000, but Thomas is hardly satisfied. "I missed four last year," he said. "No excuses, but one was in the pouring rain at Arkansas. One was blocked. One was in the cold wet against Auburn. The one at Mississippi State is one that still gets on my nerves. I shouldn't have missed that. That one was all my fault."

"It was pouring down rain at Arkansas; you couldn't hardly see. But the rain shouldn't have bothered me, and it did. Versus Auburn it was nasty weather—49 yards into the wind and I slipped. But I've learned. I hope I have the same kicks this season with the same conditions, and I go out there and not let it get in my head. I want a chance again so I can bang it through."

Thomas admits to being bothered by the driving rain in Fayetteville and the icy turf that miserable day at Bryant-Denny. But for the determinedly calm placekicker, mental preparation is rarely a problem. "I really don't think about anything before a kick," Thomas said. "Even in practice I go through the routine of concentrating. You practice so much that game time should be normal to you. I take my steps, take a deep breath and go through my rhythm. I don't think at all. I just do it. If you're thinking, then that means you need to practice a little bit more."

There is a widespread belief that talking to a kicker just before the kick is taboo. Not true. "I don't believe in superstitions," Thomas said. "All that junk just messes you up. I'll maybe talk to Nick and Jonathan, just to say 'Let's get it done.' But that's what I tell them every day in practice. We kick 20 balls in practice, and before every kick I say, 'Let's get it done.' We've done it so many times it should be normal to all of us. Do the same thing every time."

And the practice of "icing" the kicker by calling timeout in an attempt to get into his head strikes Thomas as funny. "Give me five more minutes—that just gives me more time to relax," he said. "Icing doesn't bother me. Actually, it helps me out a little bit. I was iced in junior college a number of times. Against Holmes Community College—I'll never forget it because it was the only game-winner I've ever hit—a 40-yarder. Our coaches threw us out there with only 16 seconds left on the clock instead of spiking the ball. I wasn't ready for it, and the other team gave



Neal Thomas was one of the few success stories for last year's Alabama football team. He was good on all 27 of his extra points, nine field goals (including three from 50 yards), and led the Tide in scoring.

Barry Fikes Photo

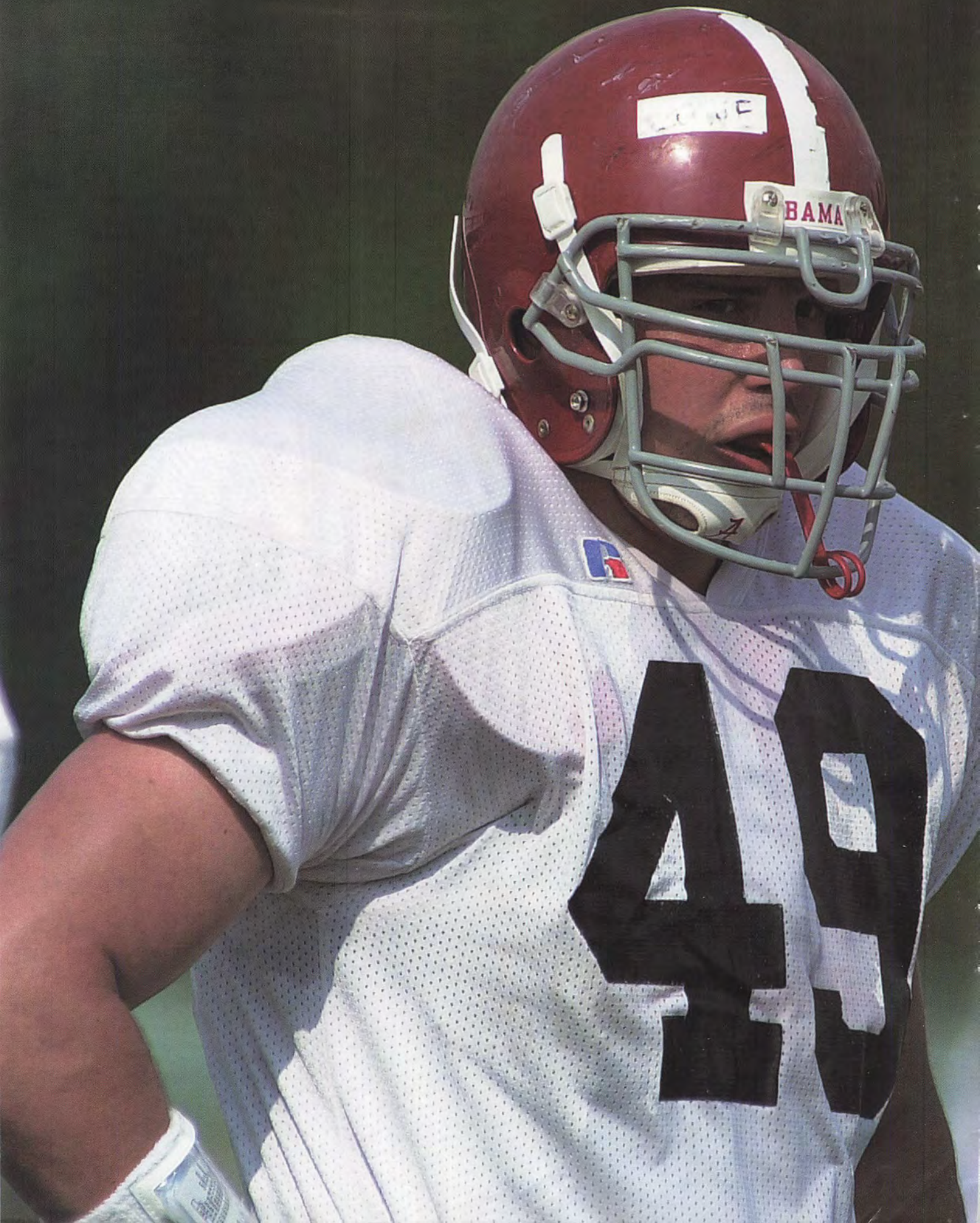
me all three timeouts. I took the time to get everything settled down instead of rushing it. So it doesn't bother me a bit. Calling a time out just gives me more time to breathe and get some water. Hang out and chill out."

Experts predict that Alabamas will be forced to rely on its defense in 2001, playing conservatively on offense and relying on a solid kicking game. But Thomas is keeping things on an even keel. "My goal is just to do my best," he said. "I've been asked if I want to win awards, but I just want to make all my kicks. I'm not shooting for awards.

I'm shooting to make every kick. Make every kick and awards will come.

"I think Coach Fran has done a great job here already. He hasn't been here long, but I like what I've seen. The new staff has everything organized. I think this is going to be a good year for Alabama."

And coming off a disappointing season in which his team underachieved, a good year would provide sweet redemption. "I never had any regrets at all," Thomas said. "Alabama and Tuscaloosa—it's where I'm supposed to be. It's been the perfect fit."





Donnie Lowe:

Fullback Is The Surprise Of Spring

by Kirk McNair

Switch from linebacker
suits sophomore very well

It was a surprise to Donnie Lowe when Alabama Head Football Coach Dennis Franchione approached the upcoming sophomore about switching from linebacker to fullback. And it was a pleasant surprise to Franchione that Lowe would respond with an outstanding spring.

Alabama players were still learning the ropes from the new Crimson Tide coaching staff when Franchione motioned for Lowe during one of the Tide's off-season conditioning workouts. "He pointed his finger at me and I wondered what I had done wrong," Lowe (rhymes with Pow! and Wow! and How Now Brown Cow) said.

Franchione and his staff had done their homework long before spring football practice got under way. The Tide head coach knew that Alabama had a depth problem at fullback and he knew that Lowe had played fullback in high school.

Lowe said, "He told me he had heard I had been a pretty good fullback in high school and asked me to think about trying it in spring practice. A day or say later he asked me to do it. I told him I'd do whatever he wanted."

Lowe provided his first surprise midway through his senior year at LaVergne High School near Nashville, Tennessee. He had committed to Vanderbilt. However, when Alabama came calling, Lowe jumped at the chance to play for his life-long favorite team, the Crimson Tide. When Lowe was signed he was a 6-2, 215-pound linebacker/fullback who was ticketed for defense. He was also advised by then-Linebackers Coach Jeff Rouzie to hit the weights. Lowe did. By the time he arrived in Tuscaloosa for drills last summer he had built himself up to 235 pounds. Another few months in the weight room got him up to 245 this spring.

Lowe said he had never been much of a workout guy, but now he's got a goal. He bench pressed 355 in the final test before spring practice got started. He said when he reports back in August (after spending the summer in Tuscaloosa) "I'll be one of the 400-pound guys," meaning one of the players who can reach the Franchione goal of bench pressing 400 pounds.

Donnie Lowe was recruited to Alabama to play linebacker, but he has been a hit in his first spring playing offense. Barry Fikes Photo



As a freshman, Donnie Lowe was trying to get the play stopped from his linebacker spot. Now he's critical to the success of the play as a blocking fullback. Lowe has also impressed Tide coaches as a runner and pass-catcher.

Barry Fikes Photo

Lowe did have success as a high school fullback. He and the tailback got about the same number of carries, and Lowe was the team's leading rusher. In his senior year he picked up about 900 yards and averaged 7.8 yards per carry. He also had 21 pass receptions, which has proved to be a plus for him.

The biggest advantage Lowe has in making the switch from middle linebacker to fullback is that things are new for everyone. "It would have been

worse if we had the same staff and the same system, because then I would have been behind the existing fullbacks," he said. "But since it's totally new, everyone is starting fresh on a level field."

Although Lowe signed with Alabama as a linebacker and preferred to play defense, "I'm like everyone else. I don't care where I play as long as I play."

Most of his playing time as a true freshman was on special teams. He saw playing time in all

11 games in various areas of the kicking game. And he also had "40 or 50 snaps in four games" as a linebacker. He said, "I played [linebacker] most of the fourth quarter in the Mississippi State game."

Although he played in some placekicking situations, he was always on the kickoff coverage and return and punt and punt return units. "It was on kickoff coverage that I learned to always be alert," he said. "I thought it was just running down the field and hitting someone. I found out in a hurry that the return team hits back, particularly if they catch you not paying attention."

He said he likes the emphasis placed on special teams. "I enjoy playing special teams and expect to be on some of them this year."

Franchione has gushed with praise for Lowe this spring. He said, "I don't like to think I'm ever surprised, because I always see the upside potential of a player. But I'd have to call Donnie Lowe a pleasant surprise after moving from linebacker to fullback."

The Tide coach said, "He has blocked well. But the best thing is that he is a good learner. He listens in meetings, works hard in drills to get his assignments right, and then takes it into the 11-on-11 work. He doesn't make mental mistakes and he adjusts."

"He's a good blocker. He can catch the football. And when he runs it, he's a load to bring down."

"He has all the components to be a talent. He's done very, very well."

Lee Fobbs, Alabama's new running backs coach, said, "You have to have a solid guy at fullback, and I think Donnie's found a home at fullback. He's very attentive and works hard. We tell all of our players that if they'll put forth the effort, everything else will come. We can iron out the mistakes if we have the effort, and Donnie exemplifies that."

Fobbs said that Lowe's "strongest trait is blocking, but he has great hands. And don't underestimate his speed."

As a runner, Lowe said, "So far 100 per cent of my runs have been between the tackles. No one would call me a 'juker.' But that's okay. I like running behind those big guys."

Les Koenning, the Tide's offensive coordinator, said, "Donnie is a physical kid who does a great job. Our fullback has to block, run and catch, and in no particular order. He's got to do it all. He's made great strides in learning his assignments. And he doesn't mind contact."

Lowe believes that one moment of contact this spring opened a lot of eyes—including his own. "Saleem (Rasheed, Bama's star junior linebacker) and I had a head-to-head, full-speed collision," Lowe said. "We both ended up on the ground. Coach Fran was excited. The guys on offense were excited. I was excited. But I don't want to say that I won the battle. Saleem brought it too. We both bounced back and went down. It's funny, but I didn't even feel it."

He said in some ways that fullback and linebacker are mirror images. "At linebacker you're running up field to make the tackle and at fullback you're running down field to make the block."

Lowe said, "I haven't missed linebacker. I miss some of the guys, but I don't miss being on defense. I feel really comfortable at fullback. I think I've picked it up fairly quickly."

Lowe said he was a little surprised that "blocking came easier than I thought after a year off. In

fact, it's easier to block than it had been to tackle. I make a conscious effort to get low, because the guy with the leverage wins the battle."

Lowe said, "Coach Fran has said that the fullback will catch a couple of passes and get a couple of runs, and that if it works well it may be more than a couple. But the primary job of a fullback has always been blocking."

The 2000 season was a surprise for Lowe. Like most so-called football experts and Crimson Tide fans, Lowe said that coming off a Southeastern Conference championship and being picked to challenge for the national championship, "My expectations were as high as they could have been."

He said by the end of that 3-8 season "I was shell-shocked. It had been the opposite of what I had expected. I tried to talk to some of the older guys, but they were as stunned as I was. No one could understand it."

He also said that when Mike DuBose and his staff were fired, "the players didn't blame them. We took it on ourselves. We were the team." Lowe was particularly disappointed that his position coach, Jeff Rouzie, was swept away. "I felt he was doing a great job," Lowe said. "I learned a lot from him."

Lowe said he and his teammates were also surprised after their coaches were fired.

"We couldn't imagine anyone having the chance to coach at Alabama turning the job down," he said. "Of course, I don't think more than one coach actually turned down the job, but the guys

following it on the internet thought someone was turning it down every week. The players didn't speculate. All we could do was wait."

"Coach Moore (Athletics Director Mal Moore) met with us several times. He assured us we would have a great coach, and in the meantime to keep up academically and to keep up with our weight-lifting because it would keep on and we still had things to accomplish."

Lowe said a final surprise came with the announcement of Coach Fran being selected.

"I said, 'Who's that?' I really didn't know much about TCU. But to tell you the truth, I'm not the kind of guy who keeps up with coaches. I probably couldn't name all the head coaches in the SEC. When we found out who our coach was going to be, we also started getting information about his record and the kind of players he had developed. We were pretty impressed and we were very pleased."

Although Lowe was clearly the number one fullback in spring practice, he said he knows that at this level there will always be competition. "And the guy who wins the job will be the one who has demonstrated he is best. The competition will always be there. You can't slack up at this level, and particularly at Alabama. I know I can be replaced."

Lowe thinks that one advantage he has is that he is a good pass receiver. "I caught passes in high school and my routes are fairly simple," he said. "As long as I don't think about it too much, I'm fine catching the ball. I'm confident I can catch

the football and I'm determined not to get labeled as someone who is not a good receiver."

He's also not under any illusions of being a breakaway runner. "I'm not thinking 55-yard run, or anything like that. I'm thinking, 'Get everything you can get.'"

Lowe won't be surprised by Alabama's primary offensive alignment in the fall. But he also said he doesn't have any idea what it will be. "We've worked on about everything except split back and wishbone," he said. "We've done a little option, shotgun with one back, I, and one back. I guess it would be called a Pro I."

Lowe is already thinking about the future. He was nearly a straight A student in high school. Although his first semester of college wasn't that good, he's got all As and Bs in his second semester.

He expects to major in education and he also plans to graduate in three years, partly because he will spend summers on campus, working out and going to school. He will work on a graduate degree in his fourth year.

Lowe wants to be a teacher, perhaps a coach as well. And he's thinking about the high school level.

"Everyone talks about the pay being so much better as a college coach," he said. "But there's more to it than money. I think I'd like coaching in high school, and I don't think I'd starve."

If he keeps performing as he did this spring, it wouldn't be a surprise if that teaching and coaching career didn't have to wait on a little more football—professional football.

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**HANA
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She's One Of Nation's Best Pitchers

by Kirk McNair

Junior right-hander holds most Tide pitching records

The computer science major straightened his black horn-rimmed glasses, adjusted his shiny new pocket-protector, took a deep breath, and made his way slowly towards the willowy, blue-eyed blonde. Marshalling all his courage, he offered his invitation for a Saturday night date. Taken aback for a moment, she finally replied. "Uh, I'm sorry, but I can't. Uh, I've got to go to, uh, pitch a double-header."

Okay, that never happened. Still, Shelley Laird, star junior pitcher for Alabama's nationally-ranked softball team, admits there's not much time for a social life between classes and the Crimson Tide's ambitious schedule. And while Laird is not often called on to pitch a double-header, she has done it on several occasions.

An Alabama football player would not appreciate the observation, "You don't look like an athlete." Laird gets it all the time, and recognizes it as a compliment. But she is an excellent athlete, and comes from an athletic background. And while the 5-9 Laird is often taken for a model, she's majoring in apparel design and hopes one day to end up in that area of the fashion world.

Laird said, "We have a very feminine-looking team and when we're in an airport or motel we get a lot of people asking if we're cheerleaders or models or something. Our trainer, Jen Cappuzzo, tells us she's never seen a team so worried about how we look. But if we can look good and play good, I think that's a plus."

Laird does play good. Although she is only a junior, she has already won All-America honors, pitched Bama into the College World Series, and turned in the first victory any Southeastern Conference team has ever had in the CWS. She holds virtually every Crimson Tide pitching record, including pitching the first no-hitter in school history. This year alone she has had a week in which she won six games and had a streak of 24 consecutive scoreless innings with three straight shutouts. It is not uncommon for Laird to record double-digit strikeouts, a difficult achievement in college softball.

Head Coach Pat Murphy said, "Shelley is one of the top ten pitchers in America. You don't get to the World Series without a top pitcher and she proved it last year." Laird was named Most Valuable Player of the NCAA Regional at Arizona State as she won four games in four days, including two

against home-standing and fifth-ranked Arizona State, to get Bama into the World Series. Her victory in the first game against Florida Atlantic was Alabama's first-ever NCAA Regional win. The triumphs over Arizona State were the first ever by an SEC team against a Pac-10 team.

Laird is one of a triumvirate of true superstars on a very fine team. The other All-America players are outfielder Kelly Kretschman and first baseman Ginger Jones, both seniors. "They could all have egos, but they are team players," Murphy said.

The Tide head coach said, "Shelley is very competitive, almost to a fault regarding herself. She absolutely hates losing."

Shelley is from Spring, Texas, just north of Houston. Her father, Gil, played basketball at Houston, and she said she gets her height and her athletic ability from her father. She also has a brother, Gil, Jr., who is a high school baseball star, an outfielder. "I think he saw what I had to go through being a pitcher and wanted to be something else," Shelley said.

Laird started her softball career at the relatively late age of 10. She said she probably would not have made it as a pitcher except for a pitching coach telling her father that Shelley didn't have what it takes to be a pitcher. "My dad didn't tell me that until later," she said. They found other coaches and father was always willing to catch as his daughter honed her pitching skills.

She ended up playing in summer league and in high school with and against some of the nation's best women's softball pitchers, including two-time Olympian Christa Williams and LSU star Britni Sneed. Her coach at Klein Oak High School, Javier Vela, had a background as a pitching coach. "He's like a second father to me," Shelley said. She also got help from Williams' father, Ed, who is also a pitching coach, when Williams and Laird played summer ball together.

When Shelley, a right-hander, started pitching at age 12, her family made the commitment to "travel ball," where she played for a team about an hour from her home to Southwest Houston. That team, as the name implies, traveled around the country playing top competition. When she was 15 she was invited to play for an 18-and-under Gold Team. "That's the best," Shelley said. The pitching coach of that team was her high school coach-to-be, Vela. The team, coached by Wayne Daigle, was made up mostly of older girls, those preparing to go to college, and included Williams and also included her current teammate and Alabama captain, Kelley Askew. (Laird rooms with the other Tide captain, pitcher/outfielder Melissa Bautista.)

"I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't started playing at that level against that type competition when I was 15," Laird said.

Texas girls softball is considered second only to California and in Shelley's senior year she pitched every game, including the 11-inning championship contest, as her high school team won the state title.

When it came to picking a college, Williams once again figured into Shelley's future. Laird had expected to go to either Texas or Texas A&M. But Williams transferred to Texas, ending the Longhorns' interest in Shelley. And A&M never recruited her. "We got lucky there," Murphy said.

Murphy said he watched Laird more than any other pitcher Alabama recruited in 1998. "A lot of people have told me they have been surprised at her success, but we were sold on her from the beginning."

Laird said, "I had a lot of offers, but none from Texas or Texas A&M or I would have gone there. I had offers from a lot of SEC schools and schools in the West. I made a recruiting trip to Nebraska, then one to Alabama. After visiting here, I cancelled all my other visits. I liked everything about Alabama—the coaches, the school, the sports tradition, and the opportunity to be part of what I thought was going to be a great program."

She said that Alabama's softball stadium wasn't a factor because it wasn't yet built. "The rumor was we were going to get the baseball field and they were going to build a new stadium for baseball," she said. "Instead we got the new stadium, which is great." Alabama played its first two years at city softball fields, but now has what is considered among the nation's best college facilities.

The transition from high school to college softball is not an easy one, particularly for a pitcher. For one thing, the pitching rubber is 40 feet from home plate in high school (and in international play), but is 43 feet in college. "The main problem is where the ball breaks," Shelley said.

At the college level almost every pitch is a breaking ball. Laird's repertoire includes fast ball, change-up, rise, drop, curve and screwball. "But you never throw the fast ball," she said. "The hitters are too good to throw them a straight ball." In fact, she's never had her fastball clocked at Alabama "because it doesn't matter since you're not going to throw it."

Murphy said that Laird would rank among the nation's fastest pitchers, probably throwing in the 63-65 miles per hour range. He said that would equate to over 90 miles per hour in baseball based on the difference in distance from pitcher to batter.

When Laird has to have a strike she will throw either a curve or a screwball. The pitches are changed by using wrist snaps and finger releases.

Murphy said, "When a pitcher looks effortless, she's probably a good pitcher. Shelley looks like she's hardly trying, but



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she's throwing hard. You've got to have different pitches, but it's also about moving the ball around. You've got to have them all, not like in baseball where a good fast ball and change-up can get you by."

Laird also had to adjust mentally. Murphy said, "Shelley has just grown tremendously in the three years she's been with us. In high school she was used to striking out 14 players a game, doing it all by herself. She had to get used to college softball. The extra three feet and also getting hit. It wasn't just getting hit, it was how she reacted. Now she gives up a single and it doesn't matter. As a freshman if she gave up a hit she thought she was falling apart. Now she realizes she has to depend on her teammates."

Laird admitted that she "buted heads a lot" with her pitching coach, Karen Johns, "when I was a stubborn freshman." But she and Johns became very close last year, and it was difficult when Johns left to become head coach at Florida. When Bama went to Gainesville this year (with Laird getting all three victories against the Gators), Shelley was briefly reunited with her former pitching coach. "I told her she didn't look good in orange and blue," Laird said.

Shelley said the question she is most often asked is "Isn't your arm going to fall off?" But although she pitches about two of every three Alabama games and often starts one game and relieves the next in a double-header, she said, "The pitching motion is natural. It's not hard on the arm like pitching in baseball." Still, while a softball pitcher's arm might be able to go all day, it's important that a pitcher get some rest. Laird thinks it's important to get some time off during the season so she'll be ready to go as long as necessary when it's time for post-season tournament play.

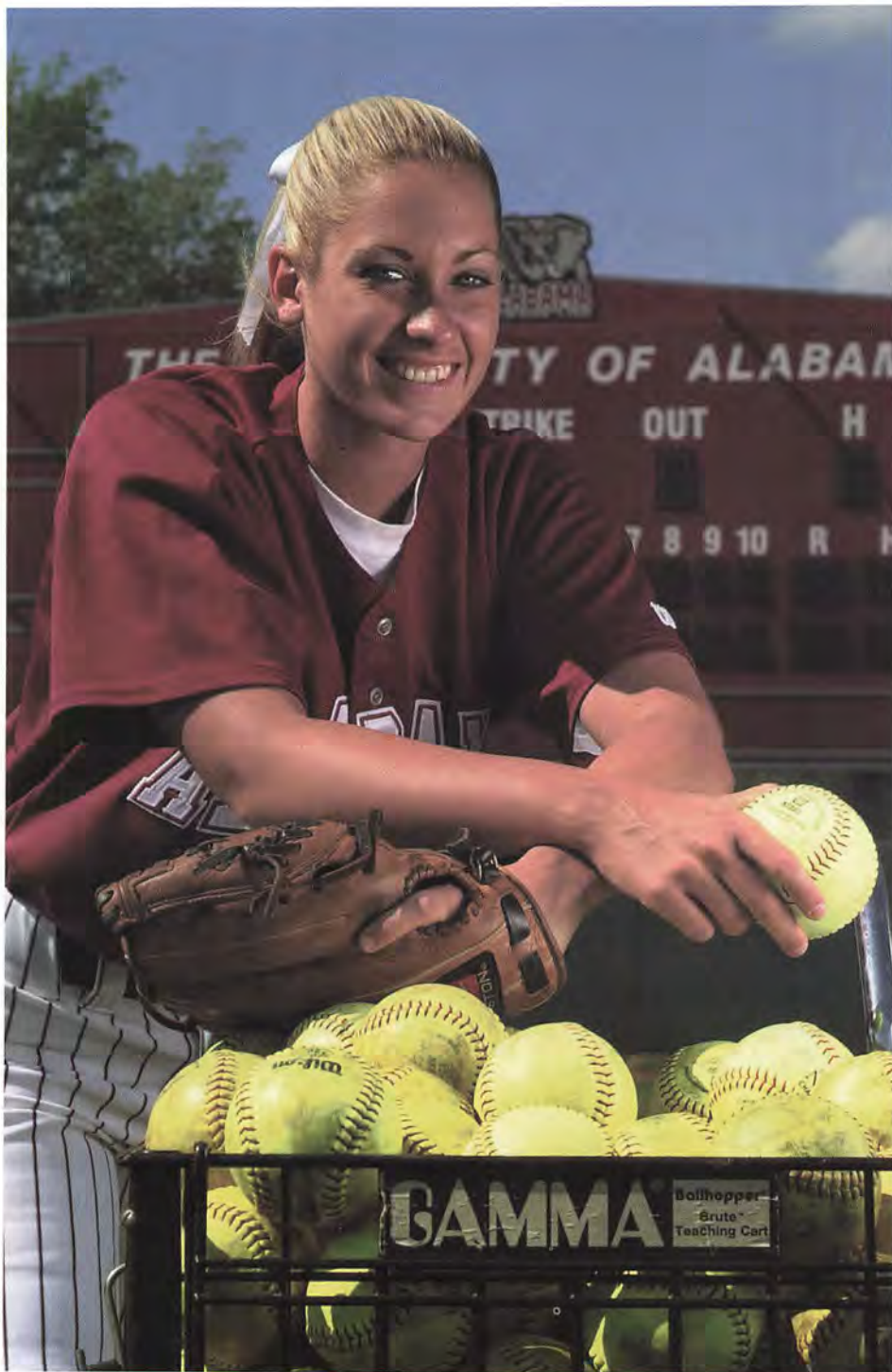
"But," she said, "I like to have the ball in my hands. It's great to pitch as much as I do on one of the nation's top teams."

Laird said she was considered Alabama's number two pitcher as a freshman, when she went 21-9. Penny Cope was Bama's top pitcher, but transferred to Nebraska to be closer to her home. That left Laird as number one in 2000 and she made the most of it with a 38-7 record. The 38 wins was third best in the nation and best in the SEC. Laird, who opened up this season with 21 straight wins, will become the all-time winningest pitcher in SEC history either late this year or early next season.

The Tide pitching coach now is Vann Stuedeman and Shelley said "She has been great. She didn't come in and try to be Karen, and I've tried not to say, 'Karen did this' or 'Karen didn't do that.' I know I wouldn't want to hear that."

While Laird may have an understanding of the game and of coaching, she said, "I don't have the patience to be a coach. I might be able to do something, but I'm not sure I could teach it. That's the hard part."

She also doesn't think much about playing professional softball when her college career



Junior right-hander Shelley Laird pitched the Alabama softball team into the College World Series last year and hopes for a repeat appearance for the Crimson Tide this spring. Barry Fikes Photo

ends. "That's not in my plans now, but when I'm through playing I might change my mind," she said.

Laird is a sports fan herself, taking in as many Alabama football, basketball and baseball games as she can. "Mostly men's sports," she said. "That's the way most people are." But she also takes in women's sports, including volleyball, which she played for a year in

high school. And she is appreciative of crowds, which have been more than double last year, at Bama softball games.

She said her goals are team goals, to win the conference championship and conference tournament and make it back to the College World Series in Oklahoma City. "Our individual goals are to help achieve those team goals," she said.

Gymnasts Happy With Fourth

Although Bama goal is national title, with Pickens lost Tide achieved much; golf, tennis have success

This is championship season for a number of sports, and the most important titles are the NCAA variety. The Alabama gymnastics squad of Coach Sarah Patterson is accustomed to being in the national championship picture. However, this year Alabama was realistically knocked out of the running almost before it had a chance to compete. In practice for the NCAA Championships held in Athens, Georgia, the Tide's top performer, Andree Pickens suffered a torn Achilles tendon and was lost for the year.

Bama had spent most of the season listed near the top of the national rankings in gymnastics. And after winning its NCAA regional with a 198.000, its highest score of the season, the Tide was poised for yet another run at a national title. But a torn tendon suffered in practice by its best athlete was more than the team could overcome. Twice named Southeastern Conference Gymnast of the Year, Pickens was the first freshman in NCAA history to earn five All-America honors. The NCAA balance beam champion in 1999, the Houston, Texas, native helped lead Alabama to the SEC title in 2000.

Without Pickens, Alabama did better than expected as the remaining gymnasts pulled together and wound up with a fourth place national finish. "With the roller coaster month we have had, that was such a great finish for us," Patterson said. "We fought for every tenth (in Athens), showing a tremendous amount of heart and fortitude. Our goal was to come away with a trophy and we did that."

Senior veteran Lissy Smith was once again rock steady on the balance beam, anchoring a no-room-for-error performance by the Tide squad that helped secure its place on the trophy stand. But it was Bama's youngsters who were the stars of the meet. Rookie Jeana Rice finished third in the all-around, the highest NCAA Championship finish by a Crimson Tide freshman since Meredith Willard took third in 1994. And sophomore Kristin Sterner took sixth in the all-around.

The third night of competition saw four Bama gymnasts advance to the individual event finals, and every athlete came away with a trophy. "I think, after three days of competition, to have all four of our ladies competing finish in the top-six was tremendous," Patterson said.

Rice earned a 9.887 on floor exercise, good enough for sixth in the nation. Natalie Barrington's 9.8625 on the uneven bars was also good enough for sixth place nationally. And both Sterner and Smith placed on the balance beam, coming in fifth and sixth respectively.

When the national meet was finished, despite a hard-luck year with no less than two injuries to star performers, Alabama closed out its season with a fourth place national finish, including 12 All-America honors.

The Crimson Tide will host next year's NCAA Championships, April 18-20, 2002. And Pickens is expected to make a full recovery from her injury.

In men's tennis, Coach Adam Steinberg's efforts to build a championship squad continues. After posting a good 19-9 season record overall, the 17-ranked Tide headed into the SEC tournament with a 7-7 league mark and seeded sixth. Alabama began by defeating last season's tournament champion Florida, 4-0, but the day was not without some drama as Tide athletes dropped first sets in three of the singles matches before earning the victories.

As it turned out, those mini-comebacks were just a hint of what was to come the next day against 13th-ranked LSU. The Tigers began by winning the doubles point and the first two singles matches at numbers two and three, taking a 3-0 lead. But the Tide's comeback began at the number one court when Alabama's 21st-ranked Maxim Belski took a three-set victory over 10th-ranked Ajay Ramswami. And three Tide wins later the upset belonged to Alabama. "It was one of the most incredible wins I've ever been involved in," Steinberg said.

In semifinal action against second seed Tennessee, it looked like Alabama would pull off another comeback, but it was not to be, as the Tide fell to the seventh-ranked Volunteers, 4-2. "Obviously we would have liked to get the win today, but looking back I think the guys will be satisfied with their performance here," Steinberg said. "It was a terrific performance by us. I think the confidence of the team is sky-high right now."

Coach Jenny Mainz's women's tennis team has improved its national standing dramatically this year. Heading into the league tournament, number 27 Alabama was 15-8 overall, and 5-7 in the SEC. In a tough opening-round match, Bama defeated number 29 Ole Miss 4-1. That victory marked the first SEC tournament win for Mainz at Alabama. "What a tremendous effort," Mainz said. "That was the best doubles that we had played all year."

But the draw was not kind to Alabama, as

the fifth-ranked Florida Gators eliminated the Tide in the quarterfinals, 4-0. Alabama ended the tournament 15-9 overall and 5-8 in the SEC. "We have nothing to hang our heads about," Mainz said afterwards. "We competed very well and showed up and played them better than we did the last time. (Florida) is a great team. We had a great performance at the SEC tournament. I am very proud of the team. We have some momentum going into regionals."

Both the men's and women's tennis squad will find out on May 3 when and where their season will continue, as the NCAA championship field and regional pairings will be announced on that date.

In women's golf, Alabama was consistent during the recent SEC Championship, but couldn't gain any ground on the tourney leaders and ended up seventh. "We knew what we needed to shoot that final round," said Coach Betty Palmer. "But unfortunately, things just didn't fall our way, especially around the greens."

Along with senior Paula Carter, Sarah Johnston represented Bama in the individual top 20. The junior Johnston led the Tide all season, never carding a round above 79 and finishing among the top 20 in every event.

NCAA tournament bids will be announced April 30. "We are in really good position for earning a bid to the NCAA Regional," Palmer said. "We're just going to go back home and get back to work in preparation."

On the men's side, Alabama bettered its chances of receiving an NCAA post-season bid when the Tide pulled a solid final round to finish fourth at the SEC Men's Golf Championship. That finish is added to a season that included seven top-five finishes and two tournament championships.

"I'm very proud of the effort we gave during the tournament," said Coach Dick Spybey. "It was good to see everybody on the team contributing. Now we'll have to wait for a possible at-large NCAA bid the first week of May."

With a 75 on his final round, Bama's Are Larsen finished ninth overall in the individual standings. Earlier he and Nick Rousey, who has been a mainstay for the Tide, had both carded a 69 second round for the low score of the day.

Should Alabama receive a team bid to the NCAA East Regional, that would take place May 17-19 in Williamsburg, Virginia. The NCAA Team Finals are May 30-June 2 in Durham, North Carolina.

-Compiled from University of Alabama Media Relations reports

Gottfried Adds Two To Staff

by Kirk McNair

Former Tider T.R. Dunn is Alabama assistant coach

Alabama Head Men's Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried will be Alabama's head basketball coach for at least the next five years, and the look of his staff will be changed for next season. Gottfried has agreed to a new contract with The University, and has also replaced two of his assistant coaches and promoted a third. One of the new assistants is former Crimson Tide star and NBA player and coach T.R. Dunn.

Athletics Director Mal Moore announced that he and Gottfried had come to an agreement regarding an extension of Gottfried's contract, which had three seasons remaining on the original pact, and shortly after that Gottfried lost two assistant coaches. By most accounts, Gottfried decided not to retain longtime Assistant Coach Tom Kelsey. And Johnny Jones, who came on board prior to last season replacing the late Robert "Rah Rah" Scott, was named head coach at North Texas State.

Although details of Gottfried's new contract were being withheld pending approval of the agreement by University President Dr. Andrew Sorensen and the Board of Trustees, it was reportedly for between \$675,000 and \$750,000 per year (depending on certain athletic and academic incentives being met) and takes Gottfried through the 2005-06 season.

"I would like to say how proud I am for The University of Alabama and for the Athletics Department that Mark will continue in this position," said Moore. "I have felt strongly for quite some time that he is doing some very positive things for this program. When a young team has success like ours has, it is only natural that other programs would be attracted to the head coach, and I appreciate Mark's love and support to this university. I think he's making a great decision for The University of Alabama."

Gottfried, who was hired as Alabama's head coach in March of 1998, said, "I'm excited about our future and I'm appreciative of The University of Alabama for allowing me to be its basketball coach. I am thankful to The University of Alabama for continuing to allow me to take us to a higher national level. I'm excited about the future for this program, and I'm very excited about working



T.R. Dunn

with Mal Moore. I see Mal's vision and his commitment, and that is a great asset for this basketball program as we look toward our future. And I'm also appreciative of the interest and growing support of our program from our fans. I think our attendance is going to continue to build and it's only going to get better."

Gottfried, a former star player for the Crimson Tide, had been approached by South Carolina at the conclusion of this season, in which Alabama went 25-11 and advanced to the championship finals of the NIT.

Interestingly, both of Alabama's new assistant coaches come to the tide from Charlotte, North Carolina. Dunn was hired away from the Charlotte Sting, where he was head coach of the Women's NBA team. In addition to Dunn, Bama added Orlando Early, an assistant with the University of North Carolina-Charlotte for the past three seasons.

Gottfried also promoted Philip Pearson to assistant head coach.

Dunn, a two-time All-America while he was a player at Alabama, earned the nickname "The Ghost" from legendary Tennessee Coach Ray Mears. Mears

said that whenever it seemed things were in good shape, "The Ghost comes out of nowhere with a key shot or rebound or steal and Alabama wins the game."

Dunn served one season as the head coach of the Sting. A popular figure in the Charlotte organization, Dunn was hired by the Sting after being an assistant coach for the Sting in 1999 and for the NBA's Charlotte Hornets from 1991-97 following a 14-year NBA career with the Phoenix Suns, Denver Nuggets and Portland Trailblazers. His longest stop as a player was with the Nuggets where he played seven seasons, from 1981-88.

Gottfried said, "I'm extremely excited and think T.R. brings a wealth of experience to our staff. Having over 20 years of experience in the NBA as a player and a coach in the NBA will be a great benefit for our young players. I'm excited about what he brings to the bench as a coach for development on and off the floor and obviously he will be an asset in recruiting."

A Birmingham native, Theodore Roosevelt Dunn III lettered at Alabama for four seasons, from 1974-77. He played at guard on three Southeastern Conference champion teams for C.M. Newton in 1974, 1975 and 1976. (His buzzer-beater at Nashville in 1976 enabled Alabama to win the title. Among those in attendance was Tennessee's Mears, whose Vols would have tied for the championship with a Vandy win.)

Dunn, who averaged 11.2 career points at Alabama, was named to the SEC All-Rookie Team in 1974 and was a Freshman All-America that season as well. He was captain of Alabama's 1976 team as a junior and and is considered to be one of Alabama's all-time greatest defensive players. In his first game as a freshman at Alabama, Dunn scored 16 points and pulled down eight rebounds. By his sixth game that freshman year, he was a starter for Alabama at guard.

"I am extremely happy to have this opportunity," said Dunn. "I always followed The University wherever I was. Mark and his staff and the athletic administration at Alabama, particularly Mal Moore, have done a terrific job. I'm excited about getting the opportunity to become a part of it. Mark has come in and done a tremendous job getting the basketball program back to the top status. I think you have a special feel there, a great group of guys who are both talented ball players and good people. I'm excited about getting the opportunity to come back to The University and be part of potentially building on it."

Dunn was a second round draft pick by the Portland Trailblazers in 1977 and played for Portland from 1977-80, moving to the

Welcome New Readers

Crimson Connection, a magazine similar to 'BAMA, is no longer being published. Those of you who were not previously subscribers to 'BAMA are receiving this complimentary issue. In upcoming weeks we will be making arrangements to fulfill the obligation of *Crimson Connection* to the extent it is economically feasible.

Nuggets the following season. He played for the Nuggets until the end of the 1988 season and then played at Phoenix the following season. He went back to Denver for two more seasons, retiring as an NBA player from the Nuggets in 1990. Dunn was named to the NBA's All-Defensive Team three times in the mid-1980's.

He was hired by the Charlotte Hornets as an assistant in 1991 after he retired as an NBA player and was an assistant at Denver for a year before returning to Charlotte. While there he coached basketball greats like Alonzo Mourning, Larry Johnson and Glenn Rice. Charlotte advanced to the NBA playoffs for the first time in franchise history with Dunn on the staff.

He was inducted into the State of Alabama Sports Hall of Fame in 1997.

Dunn was touted as the SEC's top signee when he signed with Alabama out of Birmingham's West End High School where he was a consensus prep All-America for Coach Don Burgess. Dunn, who also played safety on the West End football team and ran cross country, had a 84-12 high school record as a player and was the State tournament's MVP after his 36 points, 18 rebounds and game-winning bucket in the championship game helped lead West End to the basketball state title his junior year.

Dunn's family includes his wife, Cynthia, his oldest son, Schmohn, 27, and his youngest son, Keenan, 19, who plays for Wingate University in North Carolina.

Gottfried completed his staff in mid-April after Jones secured the head coaching job at North Texas. Jones' previous head coaching experience had been as the interim at Memphis before coming to Alabama.

North Carolina-Charlotte made it into post-season play each of the past three years with Orlando Early as an assistant coach.

"I'm excited because I think Orlando brings a tremendous amount of energy," said Gottfried. "He has a great record

in regard to recruiting and coaching. He's done a great job at UNC-Charlotte. The coaches in Conference USA that I have spoken to have a great amount of respect for him, so I think he will add a tremendous amount."

"I'm extremely excited about joining Alabama's staff and being a part of the Alabama basketball family," said Early. "To be able to compete in the SEC is a really big step for me and I'm ready to meet the challenges. Working for Coach Gottfried is going to be really exciting. He's got a lot of energy. He's young and enthusiastic and he's got a great name out there. I really think we can get it done here at Alabama."

A native of Lebanon, Virginia, Early, 33, is a 1990 graduate of Gardner-Webb where he was a four-year basketball letterman. With Early playing at point guard, Gardner-Webb won the 1988 South Atlantic Conference Championship and the NAA District 26 title. He began his coaching career in 1992 as an assistant at Gardner-Webb. He followed that in 1995 with three seasons at Western Carolina, recruiting the Southern Conference's top newcomer classes two years in a row, including the conference's Player of the Year (Bobby Phillips). He was named associate head coach for the Catamounts two of those seasons. Western Carolina won the 1996 Southern Conference championship and advanced to the 1996 NCAA tournament.

When Bob Lutz was named head coach at UNCC in 1998, he hired Early. It was a successful pairing as the 49ers advanced to the NCAA tournament in 1999 and again in 2001, making it to the second round, and advanced to the NIT in 2000. UNCC won the Conference USA Championship this past season.

Philip Pearson, a member of four NCAA tournament teams during his playing career at Alabama from 1989-92, has been an assistant with Gottfried since Gottfried first became a head coach at Murray State in 1995. Gottfried brought Pearson, a native of Montgomery, with him to Alabama when he was hired as the Tide's head coach in March 1998.

Originally Alabama's on campus recruiter, Pearson's role increased in importance in the past two years when he stepped into the role of full-time recruiting. He first took over that duty for the late Robert Scott while Scott battled cancer from September 1999 through May 2000. Last season another Tide assistant, Tom Kelsey, was found to have a malignant tumor and underwent surgery to have his kidney removed last June. During Kelsey's recovery period, Pearson again served as a full-time recruiter.

"I want to commend the work Philip Pearson has done," said Gottfried. "We've had some unusual circumstances arise here in regard to some illnesses to our staff members. Most people

don't realize that he's been out on the road recruiting for us for the past two years. Philip has had to take on a lot of additional responsibilities and responded very positively."

Gottfried added, "I like the balance and the chemistry we'll have with this staff. With Orlando, Philip and T.R., I feel like we have a staff that complements one another. My philosophy has always been to recruit as a staff—there is no recruiting coordinator—and I think this staff will work together well in that area from identifying talent to bringing them here to play as well as providing a balance in different areas of coaching on the floor. I'm excited for our future with these men on board all working together."

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Men's Basketball Adds Big Man

by Kirk McNair & Donna Fromme

Pressure on men's basketball as Wallace seems headed for NBA; women added

Former Alabama Head Basketball Coach David Hobbs had a legitimate complaint following the 1995 season when Antonio McDyess, Bama's star sophomore center, surprised everyone by announcing that he would enter the NBA draft. McDyess was a two-year starter and had blossomed into stardom in that year's NCAA Tournament. Still, his early defection to professional basketball was unexpected. It was obviously the right thing for McDyess to do as he was the second player selected and has gone on to be one of the top players in the NBA.

Hobbs' complaint stemmed from the fact that McDyess announced his decision so late in the year that, Hobbs said, he couldn't recruit a replacement. In all probability, Hobbs (or anyone else) couldn't have recruited another McDyess that year even with months notice.

This year it appears the NBA will collect another Alabama player to the NBA draft before his time has come. Unlike McDyess, Gerald Wallace is not yet a star. In fact, Wallace, the former prep All-America from Childersburg who just completed his freshman season, wasn't even a starter for Mark Gottfried's Crimson Tide.

Nevertheless, Wallace is likely to take his chances in the pay-for-play game. And while some may insist Wallace is making a mistake, it's possible, even likely, he will be a multi-millionaire soon after making that "mistake." He's not considered another Schea Cotton, the Alabama starter and leading scorer who left Alabama after last season and ended up playing for peanuts. Wallace has a mature body, which will probably hold up for him in a grueling NBA season, particularly as a down-the-line substitute. And while his statistics were not great, particularly his shooting percentages, Wallace showed flashes of ability that made many consider him a possible NBA draftee out of high school.

Wallace is a good defensive player and passer and is very quick. He averaged 9.8 points and 6.0 rebounds per game. His problem is that his shooting is sub-standard. In his first season with the Tide he was good

on 126 of 288 shots, a poor 43.8 per cent accuracy rate. However, when his 50 dunks are taken out, he was only a 31.9 per cent shooter from the field. He hit only 11 of 63 three-point shots, an anemic 17.5 per cent, and was Bama's worst free throw shooter at 56.8 per cent. And all of his numbers were worse in tougher Southeastern Conference action.

Head Coach Mark Gottfried was looking for a few good big men even before learning of Wallace's decision. Bama had already had good success in the early signing period by landing All-America guards Maurice "Mo" Williams of Jackson (Mississippi) Murrah (this year's winner of the McDonald's All-America Three-Point Shootout) and Earnest Shelton of White Station High School in Memphis, Tennessee, and forward Kei Madison of Montevallo. There is still some question about Madison making it academically. He attended one year of prep school, then one year at Iowa Western Junior College, and entered Southern Union in Wadley this year in an attempt to get his grades up.

Meanwhile, Gottfried and his staff have landed one big man in the early signing period and the Tide is continuing the search for more.

Rodney Bias, 6-9, 225, signed with Alabama in the spring signing period that began April 11. Bias, a native of Livingston who had starred for Shelton State Junior College in Tuscaloosa, had narrowed his choices to Alabama, Ole Miss and Georgia. He said he also received overtures from Florida State, Louisville and Kentucky.

Bias led the Buccaneers of Coach Barry Mohun to a 28-4 record and a berth in the Alabama Junior College championship game.

A power forward, Bias led all junior college players in rebounding with 18 per game. He also averaged 20 points and 4.5 blocked shots per outing.

Bias had one game in which he pulled down 30 rebounds, and among the spectators for that exhibition was Gottfried.

His junior college coach said, "He has an

amazing explosiveness to the ball and a knack for rebounding unlike any kid I have ever coached. he was our hardest worker in practices and our hardest worker during games, so you can't beat that combination."

Bias has some hard work ahead. He still has work to do to be academically eligible.

Meanwhile, Bama continues to recruit Moustapha Diagne, a 7-0, 220-pound center of Trinity Valley Junior College in Athens, Texas. Diagne, originally from Senegal in West Africa, has had numerous offers, but is thought to be deciding between Alabama, New Mexico, Cincinnati, and Missouri.

Some sports may have signees who have not yet been announced because the necessary paperwork has not been returned to The University. And while most attention in the spring signing period is on men's basketball, all sports except football and soccer can sign prospects in the spring.

Most winter and spring sports signed the majority of their newcomers in the early signing period last November.

Among the National Letters of Intent that have been returned are those of additions to the women's basketball, women's track and volleyball teams.

Rick Moody has signed a 6-0 post player from Jackson. Natasha Gamble is the fourth women's player Moody signed this year as Bama added Huffman's Donyel Wheeler, Mivvie Strickland of Vestavia Hills and Katie Sipe from Hillsboro, Tennessee, in the early period.

Gamble, a first team Class 4A All-State selection, averaged 17 points her senior season and led Jackson High School to four consecutive county and area titles.

"Natasha is an extremely strong and gifted player," said Moody. "She possesses tremendous leadership qualities and is a great athlete. In addition to her play on the court, Natasha is also an excellent person and student. We are very excited to have her join our program."

Alabama signed one female, LaTasha Pharr, in the fall and has signed four more this spring to the women's



Julie Farley

track and field team. Pharr, of North Rowan High School in Salisbury, North Carolina, is a triple threat as the North Carolina state champion in the 100 hurdles, the triple jump and the long jump events. She was a member of the 2000 USA Junior National Team and collected international experience on that team, travelling to Santiago, Chile with the national team.

Two distance runners have signed with the Tide this spring. Tricia Bohan of Fort. Wayne, Indiana, Northrip High School, competes in the 800 meters and placed third at the 2000 NIKE Indoor Invitational. Andrea Austin of Hollywood, Florida's Boyd Anderson High School, finished runner-up in the Florida state championships in the 800 meters. Her best time is 2:09.99 at the Footlocker Championships in Raleigh, N.C., last June. Both Austin and Bohan will run cross country at Alabama as well.

Christy Fairley out of George County High School in Lucedale, Mississippi, is the state champion in the 400 meters and she ranked second nationally indoors for the 400 meters in 2000. In national high school rankings she was fifth in the 400 meters.

From Denver, Colorado, and Montbello High School will come Beau Walker. Walker competes in the 100-meter hurdles, the 300 hurdles, the 100, and the 200. She is state champion in the 100 hurdles and the 300 hurdles and ranked second Indoor in the 60-meter hurdles.

Two more signees have been added to Judy Green's Crimson Tide volleyball team, joining the three who signed in November.



Kory Tull

Julie Farley is from Edgewood, Kentucky, and Dixie Heights High School. She's a 6-foot-1 middle blocker who has the second most kills recorded in Northern Kentucky history. She's an all-region player, and, in addition to being a three-time team MVP, Dixie Heights voted her homecoming queen her senior year.

Kory Tull is a 5-10 all-state outside hitter from Lafayette, Indiana, and McCutcheon High School. She holds several school records and was also her team's MVP for the past three seasons. As a member of a club team, the Indy ATTAC, she won a sectional championship and an invitation to nationals.

She is the valedictorian of her graduating class and played basketball and ran track in high school as well.

"I am very excited to have these young ladies joining our program," said Tide Coach Judy Green. "They are both very talented players, but I am also proud of what good people and students they are."

"Julie is one of the best raw talents in our recruiting class. She is extremely quick at the net and has tremendous potential. We plan to try her at both the middle and right side positions this fall but will likely redshirt her next season. One of our goals in recruiting was to get quicker and more athletic in the middle and Julie definitely fills that need."

"I feel very fortunate to have Kory joining us. She is a diamond in the rough. She is extremely athletic and a fierce competitor. She is a strong outside hitter who definitely solidifies our recruiting class for the fall."



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@ Vandy

Although there has been some speculation that Vanderbilt might move its game with Alabama on September 8 from its relatively small Vanderbilt Stadium (41,600) to the more spacious Adelphia Coliseum (67,000), home of the Tennessee Titans, that isn't going to happen this year. However, the Commodores will use the Bama game to generate additional revenue. The Alabama ticket has been increased in price to \$40.

It's nothing new for Southeastern Conference opponents to raise the price of the Alabama game ticket, a longtime ploy that exploits Bama having a large and loyal fan base. Last year there were howls from Tennessee when Vandy used the game against the Vols for a big payday, both by moving the game to Adelphia and raising the ticket price.

Vanderbilt Athletics Director Todd Turner said consideration was given to moving the Bama game to Adelphia and that it is possible the Commodores will play games in the future at the new stadium.

NFL Draft

Three players who completed their Alabama eligibility in 2000 were selected in this year's National Football League draft. Safety Tony Dixon was selected by Dallas in the second round, defensive end Kenny Smith by New Orleans in the third round, and tight end/offensive tackle Shawn Draper by Miami in the fifth round.

Grizzard, Dudley Selected For Trials

Two University of Alabama men's basketball players are among the 60 specially selected men invited to attend the 2001 USA Men's National Team Trials. The trials will be held May 31 through June 3, 2001 at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Crimson Tide sophomore All-Southeastern Conference players Rod Grizzard, a guard, and Erwin Dudley, a forward, are among the men selected to participate in the trials. From the trials, the World Championship for Young Men and the World University Games teams will be selected by USA Basketball's Collegiate Committee. All participants will be eligible for the World University Games team that will be competing in Beijing, China, in August. The World Championship for Young Men's team will be competing in Saitama, Japan, in late July and August.

"I'm very proud for Erwin and Rod," said Alabama Coach Mark Gottfried. "It's a great honor to be invited, and I know they will both be very determined to make these teams. Their hard work and dedication is playing off. These are honors well deserved."

Grizzard, a Birmingham native, led the SEC in scoring for most of the season and finished the season second, by just a fraction, with his average of 17.0 points a game in 36 games. (LSU's Ronald Dupree led the league at 17.3 in 29 games). Grizzard also ranked in the top 20 in the league in rebounding with his 6.1

rebounds a game and was also among the SEC's leaders in free throw shooting as well as three-point shooting.

Dudley, who is from Uniontown, led the SEC in rebounding with his 10.0 rebounds a game in 36 games, bettering everyone in the league by almost two rebounds a game. Dudley combined that muscle under the boards with his 14.4 points a game, which placed him among the league's top 10 in scoring.

Bama To Play In Wooden

There is no question the NCAA Tournament Selection Committee penalized the Alabama men's basketball team for its weak non-conference schedule this year. Alabama is making sure that doesn't happen again. The Tide has announced games against the likes of Notre Dame, Utah and Louisville. And it was recently announced that Alabama and UCLA will join Arizona and Purdue in the eighth annual John R. Wooden Classic.

The Wooden Classic doubleheader will be held at the Arrowhead Pond of Anaheim Saturday, December 8. The Arizona vs. Purdue game is a rematch of the inaugural Wooden Tradition game last year in Indianapolis, where the Boilermakers upset the nation's top-ranked Wildcats. The UCLA vs. Alabama game is a first ever showdown between two former Bruins assistant coaches from the 1995 NCAA Championship team, Bama's Mark Gottfried and UCLA Head Coach Steve Lavin.

Established in 1994, the John R. Wooden Classic is an annual tribute to the legendary former coach at UCLA.

Men's Basketball Awards

A basketball awards banquet ordinarily focuses on all-conference plaques and scoring and rebounding statistics and the like. And those feats were duly recognized at this year's Alabama men's basketball awards affair sponsored by the Tuscaloosa Tipoff Club. However, two prominent themes of the event were academics and remembering two former coaches who were victims of cancer over the past year.

Head Coach Mark Gottfried presided over the celebration. He noted that five players—Tarik London, Terrance Meade, Travis Stinnett, Jim Bakken and Jeremy Hays were all named Academic All-SEC and how all five of his seniors, Bakken, Hays, London, Alfred Moss and Martin will graduate by May. There were also moving tributes to former Tide assistant coaches Robert Scott and Kermit Koenig, both of whom died of cancer in the past year.

As for awards, Erwin Dudley was cited for leading the team in rebounding (10.0) and field goal percentage (52 per cent), Kenny Walker was named Most Improved, Bakken won the Hayden Riley Scholarship Award, Stinnett best free throw percentage (82 per cent) and three-point percentage (44 per cent), London most assists, Meade the Hustle Award, Terrance "Doc" Martin the Guy Lee Turner

Defensive Award, Rod Grizzard most blocked shots, and Gerald Wallace most steals.

Women's Basketball Awards

Seniors Joni Crenshaw and Nicole Carruth were named the permanent captains for the 2000-01 season at the Alabama women's basketball team banquet, sponsored by the women's basketball booster club, the Fastbreakers.

Head Coach Rick Moody announced that Carruth also captured the Dottie Kelso Inspiration Award, selected by the players and given annually to the player who demonstrates an inspirational attitude in all areas. Redshirt sophomore Shun Hunter took home a pair of awards. Hunter earned the Shelly Pyles Hustle Award, chosen by her teammates, and shared the Most Improved Player award with junior LaNisha Cartwell. Freshman Manisha Redus was named the squad's Scholar Athlete award winner.

The Crimson Tide finished the 2000-01 season with a 19-12 overall record. The team posted the program's 12th consecutive winning season and earned the 10th consecutive postseason appearance. Other highlights of the past season included the best start in school history (9-0), a pair of regular season tournament titles, wins over two nationally-ranked opponents, and a three-game sweep of cross-state rival Auburn.

Softball Invitees

Alabama Softball Coach Patrick Murphy could be coaching the 2004 United States Olympic Team. And one of his players on that team could be current Tide star Ginger Jones. Both recently took steps in that direction with national team selections.

The Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA) announced the selection of 12 coaches to form the USA Softball National Team Coaches Pool through the 2004 Olympic Games and Murphy is on the list. Also included was Florida Head Coach Karen Johns, who is in her first year with the Gators after having been an assistant under Murphy at Alabama.

"It's such a huge honor to be mentioned in the same breath as all the other coaches," said Murphy. "Ever since watching Olympic softball in Columbus, Georgia in 1996, it's been a dream to be able to coach at that level."

The 12 coaches will participate in the USA Softball National Team Camp, May 30-June 3 in Chula Vista, California, and will be eligible for selection to such important coaching assignments as the 2001 U.S. Cup in Hawaii, 2001 Canada Cup in Vancouver, the 2002 ISF Women's World Championship in Canada, the 2003 Pan American Games in Santo Domingo and the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

Murphy has had great success since becoming the head coach at Alabama. In his first season, he guided the Tide to the program's first NCAA Regional appearance. In 2000, he led Alabama to the Women's College World

Series, in only the fourth year of the program, and Bama led the nation in victories. This year's team has been ranked as high as third in the nation. He is the youngest coach in SEC history to reach the 100-win plateau.

All-America first baseman Ginger Jones was listed among 51 players invited to the USA Women's National Team camp May 30-June 3 at the ARCO Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista.

"This is definitely an honor to be considered good enough to get invited to camp," said Jones. "I can't wait to go out there and give it everything I have, because it would be an incredible opportunity to play with the greatest players in the world."

USA Softball will select two 16-player teams to represent the U.S. in international competitions such as the U.S. Cup in Honolulu, the Canada Cup in Vancouver and the Pan Am Qualifier in Maracay, Venezuela during the 2001 season.

The players invited are a who's who of women's fast pitch softball, including NCAA Champions, World Champions and a total of 54 NCAA All-America selections.

Jones, a Northport native, was named a First Team NFCA All-American last season after leading the SEC in home runs with 17 and tying the SEC record for RBI in a season with 69. She is currently ranked among the leaders in all hitting categories in the SEC.

Volleyball Assistant Named

Alabama Volleyball Coach Judy Green announced the hiring of Steve Walker as an assistant coach for the Crimson Tide. Walker joins the Tide staff following a one-year stint as an assistant coach at Arizona. The Wildcats went 28-5 last season with Walker on staff, advancing to the Elite 8 of the NCAA Tournament final. Arizona lost to the eventual national champions, Nebraska, in the quarterfinals.

A 1996 graduate of California State University Long Beach, Walker was a stand-out player earning All-America and all-conference honors in 1995. The starting setter and team captain for two seasons, he finished his career with the program's highest assist-per-game average.

In addition to his playing days with Cal State Long Beach, Walker was also selected to represent the U.S. at the World University Games in 1995. While at Arizona, Walker captained his club team to back-to-back NIRSA National Championships (1999, 2000). He also garnered the MVP award at the 2000 NIRSA event.

The Crimson Tide is coming off one of the best seasons in program history, finishing at 22-8 and earning the school's first-ever SEC Western Division crown.

Going To Nationals

Alabama senior volleyball player Michelle Green was invited to train and play with the United States National Women's Volleyball team in hopes of becoming part of its permanent squad.

Green, a 5-11 native of Rolla, Missouri, has been one of the nation's best outside hitters the past two seasons. A two-time All-SEC first-team and AVCA All-District selection, Green finished her Crimson Tide career as

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the program's all-time leader in kills (1,704) and total attempts (4,003). She also was second all-time in digs (1,286) and seventh in aces (101). Green becomes the first Alabama volleyball player to earn an opportunity of this level.

U.S. Assistant Kevin Hambly, formerly an assistant at UNLV, contacted Green. Green made a strong impression on Hambly when she and the Tide participated in the UNLV Invitational last September.

"This is a once in a lifetime experience for her," said Tide Coach Judy Green. "Not only is this a big honor for Michelle, but is also a tremendous accomplishment for the Alabama volleyball program."

After training at the USA Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the 10-woman team will participate in the USPV Millennium Cup Tournament, which includes matches in Chicago and St. Louis.

This training invitation is the first step in making the U.S. National team.

Volleyball Awards

Alabama's volleyball program has improved dramatically over the past four years under Coach Judy Green and a half dozen seniors were special honorees at this year's volleyball awards banquet. The Tide finished the 2000 season with a 22-8 overall record and an 11-4 mark in the Southeastern Conference. Alabama's 11 SEC victories were the most in program history and the 22 overall wins were the second most victories in modern volleyball history (1989-2000).

In addition to individual awards, the 2000 squad was recognized for capturing the program's first SEC Western Division title. Alabama also finished the season ranked fourth in the American Volleyball Coaches Association South Region poll, the highest finish ever for a Crimson Tide team.

Individual award winners included freshman Erin Price being named Most Improved, junior Lexee Marshall the Mental Toughness Extra Effort Award, and senior Monica Morales as Coaches Award winner. A trio of

Bama players shared the Academic Excellence award as Sarah Cotten, Jen Wagner and Shelly Adamcik all maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point averages.

Senior Michelle Green picked up her hardware as a first-team All-SEC selection along with earning all-region accolades and Academic All-America (first team) honors. Morales garnered an All-SEC second team nod. Allison Lange joined Green and Morales as the permanent captains for the 2000 team.

Track Honor

At this year's SEC Indoor Track and Field Championships at Kentucky, Alabama's David Kimani won the Commissioner's Trophy as the highest scoring athlete with 21.5 points. Kimani set a new Nutter Fieldhouse record in the mile run and the 3,000-meter run. He was also the anchor for the Crimson Tide's distance medley relay team that finished third, the Tide's Miguel Pate finished third in individual scoring with 20 points.

Soccer Addition

Alabama women's soccer has added Louisville, Kentucky, native Taylor Rich. "Taylor comes from a very strong club team out of Louisville," said Alabama Coach Don Staley. "She brings a great work ethic on and off the ball. She's very versatile and creative and she reads the game extremely well."

Rich is a four-time all-state performer from Ballard High School. She holds the school career goal record with 102 and was the Offensive Player of the Year from 1998-00. She is also a four-time Olympic Development Player from 1995-98.

Fore!

All-time Alabama football great Ozzie Newsome will serve as honorary chairman for the Bridge Builder Celebrity Golf Classic June 23 at Ol' Colony in Tuscaloosa. Proceeds benefit Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club, and First Tee. For information on playing in the scramble event and other opportunities contact Samory Pruitt at (205) 348-0757.

2001 Alabama Spring Sports Results

Baseball			Softball			Men's Tennis			Women's Tennis		
Date/ UA	Opponent	Time/ Opp.	Date/ UA	Opponent	Time/ Opp.	Date/ UA	Opponent	Time/ Opp.	Date/ UA	Opponent	Time/ Opp.
10	Oklahoma	8		Bama Bash		7	Troy State	0	7	Chattanooga	0
5	Oklahoma	0	6	Illinois State	0	5	Southern Miss	2	7	Denver	0
6	Oklahoma	5	11	Samford	3	7	Samford	0	4	Samford	0
3	Nicholls State	5	5	Tennessee Tech	0	7	Florida State	0	7	UNC-Greensboro	0
12	Nicholls State	2	8	Tennessee Tech	1	2	@ Kentucky	5	7	Troy State	0
13	Miami (Ohio)	2	6	Illinois State	2	7	AUM	0	4	@ Florida State	3
2	Miami (Ohio)	1		@ Texas A&M Classic		4	UAB	1	7	@ Ill.-Chicago	0
7	Miami (Ohio)	1	7	UT-Corpus Christi	0	5	South Carolina State	2	1	@ Northwestern	6
6	South Alabama	5	2	Texas A&M	1	4	Ole Miss	3	6	Mississippi State	1
1	@ UCF	5	16	UT-Corpus Christi	0	3	Tennessee	4	2	@ LSU	5
2	@ UCF	5	2	Penn State	1	4	@ So. Carolina	3	4	@ Auburn	3
3	@ UCF	4	3	Penn State	2	0	@ Georgia	7	1	@ Kentucky	6
11	Austin Peay	7		NFCA Classic @ Columbus, Ga.			Blue-Gray Tourney		2	South Carolina	5
12-11	Winthrop	0-5	7	Arizona State	6	2	Indiana State	4	1	Tennessee	6
13	Louisiana Tech	1	3	Kansas	0	4	Harvard	0	1	Florida	6
4	Vanderbilt	12	6	Massachusetts	3	4	Northwestern	1	1	@ Georgia	6
16	Vanderbilt	4	1	Michigan	0				4	@ Ole Miss	3
6	Vanderbilt (10 inn.)	7	7	Michigan	2	6	Middle Tennessee	1	1	Vanderbilt	6
3	@ Kentucky	1		Crimson Classic		3	Vanderbilt	4	6	Houston	1
15	@ Kentucky	1	5	Marshall	1	5	@ Furman	2		La-Monroe	
26	@ Kentucky	7	6	Evansville	0	6	@ Clemson	1		UAB	
9	B'ham Southern	1				4	@ Florida	2	4	Arkansas	3
3	@ Ole Miss	6	2-6	Ball State (2)	0-5	2	LSU	5		SEC Championships	
8	@ Ole Miss	7	11-4	@ Georgia (2)	0-2	3	Arkansas	4	4	Ole Miss	1
9	@ Ole Miss	11	9	@ Georgia	1	4	Mississippi State	3	0	Florida	4
2	@ Louisiana Tech	7	1-4	Arkansas (2)	0-0	3	Baylor	4		May 11- NCAA Regionals	
Mar. 28	@ Northwest St.	rain	3	Arkansas	0	4	Auburn	1		May 13 TBA	
12	South Carolina	1	9	@ Jacksonville St	0		SEC Championships			May 17- NCAA Championships	
13	South Carolina	2	7-4	@ Tennessee (2)	1-6	4	Florida	0		May 25 @ Stone Mountain, Ga	
7	South Carolina	5	11	@ Tennessee	0	4	LSU	3			
Apr. 3	Jacksonville St.	rain	9-2	@ Florida (2)	0-1	4	Tennessee	4			
7	Southern Miss	4	8	@ Florida	3	2					
9	Georgia	3	6-12	Kentucky (2)	2-6		May 21- NCAA Championships				
9	Georgia	3	8	Kentucky	0		May 27 @ Athens				
1	Georgia	8	Apr. 3	@ UAB	rain						
6	UAB	10	Apr. 4	UAB	rain						
5	@ UAB	6	0-1	@ LSU (2)	1-3						
11	@ Tennessee	3	0	@ LSU	5						
6	@ Tennessee	7	2-4	Chattanooga (2)	1-5						
7	@ Tennessee	8	3-6	Ole Miss (2)	0-0						
8	West Alabama	5	7	Ole Miss	0						
4	@ Auburn (11 inn.)	5	8-6	Auburn (2)	0-4						
5	@ Auburn	7	5	Auburn	1						
5	@ Auburn	10	7-3	Mississippi St (2)	0-2						
Apr. 25	Samford	7:00	8	Mississippi State	0						
Apr. 27	LSU	7:00	Apr. 24	Troy @ Mont. (2)	5:00						
Apr. 28	LSU	4:00	Apr. 28	@ So. Carolina (2)	1:00						
Apr. 29	LSU	1:00	Apr. 29	@ So. Carolina	1:00						
May 4	@ Miss. State	6:30	May 4	@ Albany (2)	6:00						
May 5	@ Miss. State	5:00	May 10	SEC Tournament							
May 6	@ Miss. State	1:30	May 12	@ Chattanooga, Tenn.							
May 11	Arkansas	7:00	May 17	NCAA Regionals							
May 12	Arkansas	4:00	May 20	@ campus sites							
May 13	Arkansas	1:00	May 24	College World Series							
May 16	SEC Tournament		May 28	@ Oklahoma City							
May 20	@ Hoover Met										
May 25	NCAA Regionals										
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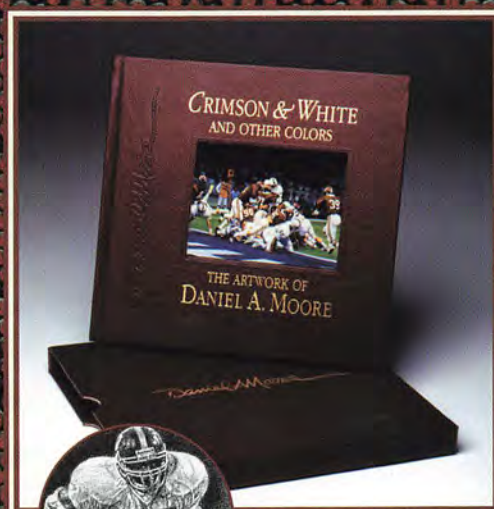


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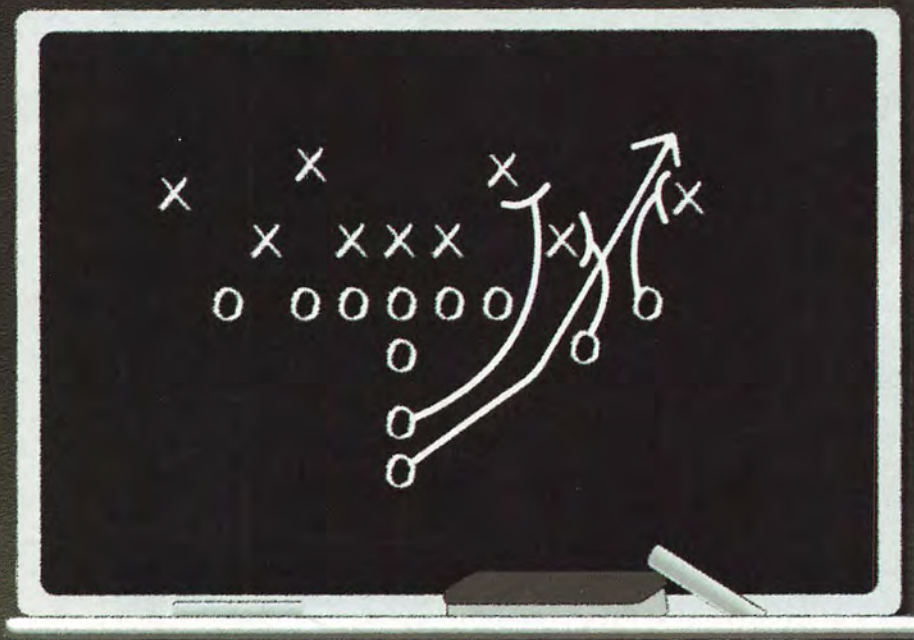
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